

A
R E P L Y
T O
M^r. J. S. his 3^d APPENDIX,
Containing some
Anⁱmadver^sions
ON THE
B O O K
ENTITULED
A RATIONAL ACCOUNT of the
Grounds of
Protestant Religion.

By Ed. Stillingfleet B. D.

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X



An Appendix to the Rule of Faith.

To his honoured Friend Mr. *John Tillotson.*

SIR,

§ 11
AS soon as I understood your intentions to answer Mr. Serjeant, I could not but rejoice on his behalf, as well as on the truths and your own. For I have that real kindness for him, that I heartily wish him that reason and science he pretends to; which I could not but despair of his attaining, unless he were deceived in that monstrous opinion he

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hath of himself and his undertakings. And I knew no person more fit than you, to let him understand the truth and himself together. In which, your performances have been so clear and satisfactory, that I hope Mr. *Sergeant*, instead of another Letter of directions to his Answerer, will write you one of thanks, for the reason and kindness you have shewed him throughout your Book. Unless it fares with you, as it hath done with some other *Adversaries* of theirs, that their civility hath been interpreted as an argument of their uncertainty, and their own confidence cried up for a demonstration. In which sense only I shall grant our *Protestant* Writers to build on uncertainties, and Mr. *White* and Mr. *Serjeant* to be the great *Demonstrators* of this age. If their own reason had been as *severe* as the *censures* at *Rome* against them, they had saved us the labour of any answer, and would have found out their own *sophistry* without a confutation. But the least thing we can imagine by their excessive confidence, is, that they are deceived themselves; and therefore it is a part of charity to them, as well as justice

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justice to the truth, to let the world see, that big words are quite another thing from science, and a strong presumption from a regular demonstration. As to which, no more need to have been said, than what you have already done, if Mr. Serjeant had not thought it an accession to the glory of his achievements, to lead two Pages of my Book in triumph after him. I confess, I was somewhat surprized to see a person who would be noted for his valour in assaulting *Protestant* Writers, steal so behind the main bulk and design of my Book ; and when he had gotten two single Pages by themselves, fall upon them with as much pomp and ostentation, as if he had attack'd the whole. And this must be noised abroad as an *Answer* to me, by the same figure that his arguments are called demonstrations, which is by an *hyperbole* unfit for any, but such who never flag below the *sphere of Science* in their own judgments, though they seem not to come near it in others. Yet since Mr. Serjeant is not only pleased to concern himself so far as to answer that part of my Book relating to oral tradition;

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dition ; but in most express terms to challenge me to reply to him, he may now see (as soon as I could get any liberty from greater employments) how ready I am to give him all reasonable satisfaction. And in the first place, I return him thanks for the weapon he hath made choice of, *viz.* that of *reason* ; there being no other I desire to make use of, in managing this debate between us : And I hope he will find as much civility towards him throughout this discourse, as he expresses towards me in the entrance to his ; if that may be accounted any real civility, which is intended meerly out of design, with the greater advantage to disparage the cause I have undertaken, and yet see no reason to repent of. *If in his cursory view of two Chapters of my Book he had* (as he saith) *quite lost me*, he had no cause to be troubled for it, if he had found far more excellent persons, such as *Dr. Hammond, and the Disswader, and Dr. Pierce, instead of me.* But to be sure, he intends not this in honour to any of us, but by way of a common reproach to us all, as though *we did not talk out of nature or things, but words and*

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and imagination. I could heartily have wished, Mr. S. would have cropt so much of the victory due to anothers learning and industry, as to have shewed me one proposition in those discourses, which a rational understanding, that would be true to it self, could not settle or rely on. But if such insinuations as these must pass for answers, I must needs say, I judg M. S. equally happy in confuting our grounds, and in demonstrating his own; in both which, his greatest strength lies in the self-evidence of his bare affirmations. But it seems he is willing to resign the glory of this *Victory* to the judicious Author of *Labyrinthus Cantuariensis*, or to some others for him; and when they have once obtained it; I shall not envy them the honour of it. And I suppose those persons, whoever they are, may be able by this time, to tell Mr. S. it is an easier matter to talk of *Victories* than to get them. But if they do no more in the whole, than Mr. S. hath done for his share, they will triumph no-where, but where they conquer, viz. in their own fancies and imaginations. Therefore leaving them to their silent conquests, and as yet, un-

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heard-of Victories, we come to Mr. S. who so liberally proclaims his own in the point of oral tradition. *Which* (in a phrase scarce heard of in our language before) is the *Post*, he tells us, he hath taken upon him to explicate further and defend. What the *explicating a Post* means, I as little understand, as I do the force of his demonstrations; but this, and many other such uncouth forms of speech, up and down in his Book (which make his style so smooth and easie), are I suppose intended for embellishments of our tongue, and as helps to *sure-speaking*, as his whole Book is designed for *sure-footing*.

§. 2.

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But letting him enjoy the pleasure and felicity of his own expreſſions, I come to consider the matter in debate between us. And his first controversie with me, is, *for opposing the infallibility of oral tradition, to doctrinal infallibility in Pope and Councils.* A controversie fitter to be debated among themſelves, than between him and me: For is any thing more notorious, than that *infallibility* is by the far greatest part of *Romanists* attributed to the present *Church*,

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Church, in teaching and delivering matters of faith, not by virtue of any oral tradition, but the immediate assistance of the *Holy Ghost*; and that this is made by them the only ground of divine faith? For which Mr. *S.* may if he please, consult his *judicious Author* of *Labyrinthus Cantuariensis*, or any other of their present Writers, except Mr. *White* and *himself*. He need not therefore have been to seek for the meaning of this doctrinal infallibility, as opposed to traditionary, if he had not either been ignorant of the opinion of their own Writers, or notoriously dissembled it. For this infallibility is not attributed to the Rulers of the Church, merely as *Doctors* or *Scholars*, but as the representative *Church*, whose office it is, to deliver all matters of faith by way of an infallible testimony to every age, and thereby to afford a sufficient foundation for divine faith. But Mr. *S.* attributes no such infallibility to the representative Church, as teaching the rest, but derives their infallibility from such grounds as are common to all parts of the essential Church. Wherein he apparently opposes himself

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to the whole current of their own Authors, who resolve all faith into the immediate assistance of the Holy Ghost; without which, they assert, there could be no infallibility at all in tradition, or any thing else; and therefore these opinions are as opposite to each other as may be. For such an infallibility is not attributed by them to the Teachers of the *Church*, meerly *on some signal occasions*, as Mr. S. seems to suppose, when they are to explain new matters of faith; but it is made by them to be as necessary as believing it self, because thereby the only sure foundation of faith is laid; and therefore it is very evident, they make it proper to the Church in all ages: Or else in some age of the Church men were destitute of sufficient grounds of faith. For they by no means think it a sufficient foundation for faith, that one age of the Church could not conspire to deceive another; for this they will tell him, at most, is but a humane faith; but that Christ by his promise hath assured the Church, that there shall never be wanting in it the infallible assistance of his Holy Spirit, whereby they shall infallibly

bly teach and deliver all matters of faith. And if this be not their opinion, let them speak to the contrary, which if they do, I am sure they must retract their most elaborate discourses about the resolution of faith, written by the greatest Artists among them. Let Mr. S. then judg, *who it is that stumbles at the Threshold*; but of this difference among them, more afterwards. By this it appears, it was not on any mistake that I remained unsatisfied in the Question I asked, *Whether am I bound to believe what the present Church delivers to be infallible?* To which Mr. S. answers, *I understand him not.* My reply shall be only that of a great *Lawyers* in a like case, *I cannot help that.* I am sure my words are intelligible enough; for I take *infallible* there as he takes it himself, for *infallibly true*; although I deny not the word to be improperly used in reference to things; and that for the reason given by him, *because fallibility & infallibility belong to the knowing power, or the persons that have it, and not to the object.* But we are often put to the use of that word in a sense we acknowledg improper, p. 204.
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merly in compliance with our Adversaries, who otherwise are apt to charge us with having only uncertainties and probabilities for our faith; if we do not use the term *infallible* as applied to the truth of the thing. I am content therefore wherever, in what I have writ, he meets that term so applied, that he take it only in his own sense, for that which is *certainly true*; for I mean no more by it. And in this sense Mr. S. answers affirmatively, and gives this account of it, *not only because the present Church cannot be deceived in what the Church of the former age believed, but because the Church in no age could conspire against her knowledg to deceive that age immediately following in matter of fact, evident in a manner to the whole world.* The Question then is, whether this be a sufficient account for me to believe that to be certainly true, or to be the doctrine of Christ and his Apostles, which the present Church delivers? and consequently, whether the resolution of faith be barely into oral tradition?

¶. 3.

Thus we see the clear state of the Question between us. I come therefore

fore to the vindication of those things which I had objected against this way of resolving faith into oral tradition. Three things I especially insisted on :
1. That it is inconsistent with the pretensions of the present *Roman* Church.
2. That it hath not been the way owned in all ages of the Christian Church.
3. That it is repugnant to common sense and experience, and that the Church of *Rome* hath apparently altered from what was the belief of former ages. If these three be made good, there will be no cause to *glory* in this last invention, to support the sinking fabrick of that Church. These three then I undertake to defend against what Mr. *Serjeant* hath objected against them.

1. That it is contrary to the pretensions of the present *Roman* Church. And if it be so, there can be no reason for those who are of it, to rely upon it. For if so be that Church pretends, that the obligation to faith arises from a quite different ground from this ; how can they who believe that Church infallible, venture their faith upon any other principle than what is publickly owned by

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by her? And whoever thinks himself bound to believe by virtue of an infallible assistance of the present Church, doth thereby shew, that his obligation doth not depend upon what was delivered by the former ages of the Church. As those who believed the Apostles were infallible in their doctrine, could not resolve their faith into the infallibility of oral tradition, but into that immediate assistance by which the Apostles spake; and where there is a belief of a like assistance, the foundation of faith cannot ly in the indefectibility of tradition, but in that infallible Spirit which they suppose the Church to be assisted by. For supposing this oral tradition should fail, and that men might believe that it had actually failed; yet if the former supposition were true, there was sufficient ground for faith remaining still. And what assurance can any one have, that the present Church delivers nothing for matter of faith, but what hath been derived in every age from Christ and his Apostles, if such an infallible Spirit be supposed in the present Church which was in the Apostles themselves?

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For on the same reason that those who heard the Apostles were not bound to trouble themselves with the tradition of the former age ; no more ought they who believe the present *Roman* Church to have the same infallible assistance. They need not then enquire, whether this age knew the meaning of the former, or whether one age could conspire to deceive another, or whether notwithstanding both these, errors might not come into the Church ; it is sufficient for them, that the definitions of the present Church are infallible in all matters of faith. Therefore my demand was built on very good reason ; *How can you assure me the present Church obliges me to believe nothing but only what, and so far as it received from the former Church ?* And Mr. S's answer is far from being satisfactory, *That this appears by her manifest practice, never refusing communion to any man, that could approve himself to believe all the former age did.* For this may be resolved into a principle far different from this, which is the belief of the infallibility of the present Church. For supposing, that they

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they are not bound to enquire themselves into the reasons why the tradition could not fail in any age ; it is sufficient for them to believe the Church infallible ; and if it be so, in proposing matters of faith, it must be so in declaring what the belief of the former age was. But my demands go on, *What evidence can you bring to convince me both that the Church always observed this rule, and could never be deceived in it ?* Which question is built on these two Principles which the infallibility of oral tradition stands on : 1. That the Church must always go upon this ground. 2. That if it did so, it is impossible she should be deceived. Both which are so far from that *self-evidence* which M. Serjeant still pretends to in this way, that the *Jesuits* principles seem much more rational and consistent, than these do. For granting them but that one *Postulatum*, that there must be an inherent infallibility in the testimony of the present Church, to afford sufficient foundation for divine faith, all the rest of their doctrine follows naturally from it. Whereas this new way of resolving faith is built on

on such suppositions, which no man well in his wits will be ready to grant. For unless it be *self-evident* that the Church did always proceed on this ground, it cannot be *self-evident* that oral tradition is infallible; because the *self-evidence* of this principle depends on this, that in all ages of the Church, the only rule and measure of faith, was what was delivered by oral tradition from the age foregoing. Now if it be possible, that matters of faith might be conveyed in ways quite different from this, what *self-evidence* can there be, that the Church much always proceed upon this? Mr. S. then, must demonstrate it impossible for matters of faith to be conveyed to posterity in any other way than oral tradition; and not only that the thing is impossible, but that the Church in all ages judged it to be so; or else he can never make it at all evident, that the Church always made this her rule of faith. But if either there may be a certain conveyance of the doctrine of faith another way, *viz.* by writing, or that the Church might judge that way more certain, whether it were so or not, either

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ther way it will appear far enough from *self-evidence*, that she always judged of doctrines of faith, meerly by the tradition of the preceding age. If another way be granted possible, there must be clear demonstration, that the Church notwithstanding this, did never make use of it; for if it did make use of another way of resolving faith in any age of the Church, then in that age of the Church oral tradition was not looked on as the ground of faith; and if so, notwithstanding whatever Mr. S. can demonstrate to the contrary, that age might have believed otherwise than the immediately preceding did. For let us but suppose, that all necessary doctrines of faith were betimes recorded in the Church, in Books universally received by the Christians of the first ages; is it not possible, that age which first embraced these Books, might deliver them to posterity as the rule of their faith, and so down from one age to another; and doth it not hence follow, that the rule of faith is quite different from a meer oral tradition? Let Mr. S. then either shew it impossible, that the do-
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Crines of faith should be written ; or that being written, they should be universally received ; or that being universally received in one age, they should not be delivered to the next ; or being delivered to the next, those Books should not be looked on as containing the rule of faith in them ; or though they were so, yet that still oral tradition was wholly relied on as the rule of faith ; and then I shall freely grant that Mr. S. hath attempted something towards the proof of this new *hypothesis*. But as things now stand, it is so far from being *self-evident*, that the Church hath always gone upon this principle, that we find it looked on as a great novelty among them in their own Church ; and it would be a rare thing, for a new invention to have been the sense of the Church in all ages ; which if it hath been, the strength of it is thereby taken away.

But let us suppose that the Church did proceed upon this principle, *that nothing was to be embraced, but what was derived by tradition from the Apostles* ; how doth it thence follow, that

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nothing could be admitted into the Church but what was really so derived from them? Do we not see in the world at this day, that among those who own this principle, contradictory propositions are believed; and both sides tell us, it is on this account, because their doctrine was delivered by the *Apostles*? doth not the *Greek Church* profess to believe on the account of tradition from the *Apostles* as well as the *Latin*? If that tradition failed in the *Greek Church*, which was preserved in the *Latin*, either Mr. S. must instance on his own principles in that age which conspired to deceive the next, or he must acknowledg, that while men own tradition they may be deceived in what the foregoing age taught them; and consequently those things may be admitted as doctrines coming from the *Apostles* which were not so, and some which did may be lost, and yet the pretence of tradition remain still. What *self-evidence* then can there be in this principle, when two parts of the Church may both own it, and yet believe contradictions on the account of it? It is then worth

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our enquiring, what *self-evidence* this is which Mr. S. speaks so much of, which is neither more nor less, *but that men in all ages had eyes, ears, and other P. 205; senses, also common reason, and as much memory as to remember their own names and frequently inculcated actions.* Which is so very reasonable a *postulatum*, that I suppose none who enjoy any of these will deny it. Let us therefore see how he proceeds upon it. *If you disprove this, I doubt we have lost mankind, the subject we speak of; and till you disprove it, neither I, nor any man in his wits can doubt, that this rule depending on testifying, that is, sense or experience, can possibly permit men to be deceivable.* Big words indeed; but such as evidence that all men who are in their wits do not constantly use them. For I pray Sir, what doth Mr. S. think of the *Greek Church*? Had not those in it eyes, ears, and other senses, as well as in the *Latin*? Do not they pretend and appeal to what they received from their *Fore-fathers* as well as the *Latins*? It seems then a deception is possible in the case of testifying, and therefore this doth more than permit men to be deceivable; for here hath

been an actual deception on one side or other. But we need not fear *losing mankind in this*; for the possibility of error supposeth mankind to continue still; and if we take away that, we may sooner lose it than by the contrary. But what repugnancy can we imagine to humane nature, that men supposing doctrines of faith to come down from *Christ* or his *Apostles*, should yet mistake in judging what those doctrines are? Had not men eyes, and ears, and common sense in *Christ* and the *Apostles* times? And yet we see even then the doctrine of *Christ* was mistaken; and is it such a wonder it should be in succeeding ages? Did not the *Nazarenes* mistake in point of circumcision, the *Corinthians* as to the resurrection, and yet the mean time agree in this, that *Christ's* doctrine was the rule of faith, or that they ought to believe nothing but what came from him? Did not the Disciples themselves err, even while they were with *Christ*, and certainly had eyes, and ears, and common sense as other men have, concerning some great articles of Christian faith, viz. *Christ's* passion, resurrection, and the nature

ture of his Kingdom? If then such who had the greatest opportunities imaginable, and the highest apprehensions of *Christ*, might so easily mistake in points of such moment, what ground have we to believe, that succeeding ages should not be liable to such misapprehensions? And it was not merely the want of clear divine revelation which was the cause of their mistakes; for these things were plain enough to persons not possessed with prejudices; but those were so strong as to make them apprehend things quite another way than they ought to do. So it was then, and so it was in succeeding ages; for let Parents teach what they pleased for matters of faith, yet prejudice and liableness to mistake in Children, might easily make them misapprehend either the nature or weight of the doctrines delivered to them. So that setting aside a certain way of recording the matters of faith in the Books of *Scripture*, and these preserved entire in every age, it is an easie matter to conceive, how in a short time *Christian Religion* would have been corrupted as much as ever any was in the world.

For when we consider how much notwithstanding *Scripture*, the pride, passion, and interests of men have endeavoured to deface *Christian Religion* in the world, what would not these have done, if there had been no such certain rule to judg of it by ? Mr. S. imagines himself *in repub. Platonis*, but it appears he is still *in fœce Romuli* ; he fancies there never were, nor could be any differences among *Christians*, and that all *Christians* made it their whole business to teach their posterity matters of faith, and that they minded nothing in the world but the imprinting that on their minds that they might have it ready for their Children ; and that all Parents had equal skill and fidelity in delivering matters of *Religion* to their posterity. Whereas in truth, we find in the early ages of the *Christian Church* several differences about matters of faith, and these differences continued to posterity, but all parties still pleading that their doctrine came from the *Apostles*; & it fell out unhappily for Mr. S. that those were commonly most grossly deceived who pretended the most to oral tradition from the *Apostles* ; still

still we find the grand debate was, what came from the *Apostles*, and what not ? whereas had tradition been so infallible a way of conveying, how could this ever have come into debate among them ? What , did not they know what their Parents taught them ? It seems they did not, or their Parents were no more agreed than themselves ; for their differences could never be ended this way. Afterwards came in for many ages such a succession of ignorance and barbarism, that *Christian Religion* was little minded either by Parents or *Children*, as it ought to have been ; instead of that, some fopperies and superstitions were hugely in request, and the men who fomented these things were cried up as great *Saints* and workers of miracles. So that the miracles of *S. Francis* and *S. Dominick* were as much, if not more carefully conveyed from Parents to Children in that age, than those of *Christ* and his *Apostles* ; and on this account posterity must be equally bound to believe them, and have their persons in equal veneration. If men at last were grown wiser, it was because they did not be-

lieve Mr. S's principles, that they ought to receive what was delivered by their Parents; but they began to search and enquire into the writings of former ages, and to examine the opinions and practices of the present, with those of the primitive Church, and by this means there came a restoration of *Learning* and *Religion* together.

§. 5.

But though matters of fact be plain and evident in this case, yet M. S. will prove it impossible there should any errors come into the *Christian Church*; and his main argument is this, *because no age of the Church could conspire against her knowledg to deceive that age immediately following, in matter of fact, evident in a manner to the whole world*. But before I come, more particularly, to shew the weakness of this argument, by manifesting how errors might come into the Church without such a conspiracy as this is, I shall propound some *Queries* to him. 1. What age of the *Church* he will instance in, wherein all persons who were not cast out of the *Church*, had the same apprehensions

hensions concerning all points of faith *i. e.* that none among them did believe more things delivered by Christ or the *Apostles* than others did. I am sure he can neither instance in the age of the *Apostles* themselves, nor in those immediately succeeding them; unless Mr. S. the better to defend his *hypothesis*, will question all written records, because they consist of *dead letters*, and *un-senc't characters*, and *wordish testimonies*. Never considering, that while he utters this, he writes himself; unless he imagines there is more of *life*, *sense*, and *certainty* in his *Books*, than in the *Scriptures* or any other writing whatsoever. 2. Where there were different apprehensions in one age of the Church, whether there must not be different traditions in the next? For as he looks on all *Parents* as bound to teach their *Children*, so on *Children* as bound to believe what their *Parents* teach them. On which supposition different traditions in the succeeding age must needs follow, different apprehensions in the precedent. 3. Whether persons agreeing in the substance of doctrines may not differ in their

apprehensions of the necessity of them? As for instance, all may agree in the article of Christ's descent into Hell, but yet may differ in the explication of it, and in the apprehension of the necessity of it in order to salvation. So that we must not only in tradition about matters of faith enquire, what was delivered, but under what notion it was delivered; whether as an allowable opinion, or a necessary point of faith. But if several persons, nay multitudes in the Church may have different notions as to the necessity of the same points, by what means shall we discern what was delivered as an opinion in the Church, and what as an article of faith? But Mr. S. throughout his discourse takes it for granted, that there is the same necessity of believing and delivering all things which concern the Christian doctrine; and still supposes the same *sacredness, concern, necessity*, in delivering all the points in controversie between the *Romanists* and Us, as there was in those main articles of faith, which they and we are agreed in. Which is so extravagant a sup-

supposition, that it is hard to conceive it should ever enter into the head of a person pretending to reason ; but as extravagant as it is, it is that without which his whole fabrick falls to the ground. For suppose we should grant him , that the infinite concerns which depend on the belief of the *Christian doctrine* should be of so prevalent nature with the world, that it is impossible to conceive any one age should neglect the knowing them, or conspire to deceive the next age about them ; yet what is all this to the matters in difference between us ? Will Mr. S. prove the same *sacredness, necessity, concern, and miraculously attestedness* (as he phrases it) in the *Invocation of Saints, Purgatory Transubstantiation, Supremacy, &c.* as in the believing the death and resurrection of the Son of God. If he doth not prove this, he doth nothing ; for his arguments may hold for doctrines judged universally necessary, but for no other. Therefore Mr. S. hath a new task which he thought not of ; which is, to manifest that these could not be looked on as *opinions*, but were embraced

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braced as *necessary articles of faith*. For unless he proves them such, he can neither prove any obligation in *Parents* to teach them their *Children*, nor in *Children* to believe what their *Parents* taught, but only to hold them in the same degree which they did themselves. When Mr. *S.* will undertake to prove, that the whole *Church*, from the time of Christ, did agree in the points in difference between us, as necessary articles of faith, I may more easily believe, that no age could be ignorant of them, or offer to deceive the next about them. But when Mr. *S.* reflects on his frequent concession, that there are *private opinions* in the *Church*, distinct from *matters of faith*, he must remember, before he can bring home his grounds to the case between their *Church* and ours, that he must prove none of the things in debate, were ever entertained as *private opinions*, and that it is impossible for that which was a *private opinion* in one age, to become a *matter of faith* in the next.

§ 6.

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ruins his whole demonstration, I shall first propound it in his own terms, and then shew how from thence it follows, that errors may come into the *Church*, and be entertained as matters of faith. His words are, *It being evident, that we have but two ways of ordinary knowledg, by acts of our soul, or operations on our body, that is, by reason and experience; the former of which belongs to Speculators or Doctors, the second to Deliverers of what was received, or Testifiers.* And this distinction he frequently admits, not only in the present age of the *Church*, but in any; for the same reason will hold in all. From hence I propose several *Queries* further to Mr. S. 1. If every one in the *Church* looked on himself as bound to believe just as the precedent age did, whence came any to have *particular opinions* of their own? For either the *Church* had delivered her sense in that case or not; if not, then tradition is no certain conveyer of the *doctrine* of *Christ*; if she had, then those who vented private speculations were *Hereticks* in so doing; because they opposed that doctrine which the *Church* received from *Christ*

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Christ and his Apostles. If Mr. S. replies, that *private speculations are in such cases where there is no matter of faith at all*, he can never be able to help himself by that distinction in the case of his own *Church*; for I demand, whether is it a *matter of faith*, that men ought to believe *oral tradition infallible*? If not, how can men ground their faith upon it? If it be, then either some are *meer speculators* in matters of faith; or all who believe on the account of the *Popes infallibility* are *Hereticks* for so doing. 2. If there were *speculators* in former ages as well as this, whether did those men believe their own *speculations* or no? If not, then the *Fathers* were great *Impostors*, who vented those *speculations* in the *Church* which they did not believe themselves. And it is plain, Mr. S. speaks of such opinions which the asserters of, do firmly believe to be true: And if they did, then they look on themselves as bound to believe something which was not founded on the tradition of the *Church*; and consequently, did not own *oral tradition*, as the *rule of faith*. So that as many *speculators* as we find in the *Church*,

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so many *testifiers* we have against the *infallibility of oral tradition*. 3. Whether those persons who did themselves believe those opinions to be true, did not think themselves obliged to tell others they ought to believe them; and consequently, to deliver these as matters of faith to their children? Let Mr. S. shew me any inconsequence in this; but that it unavoidably follows upon his principles, that they were bound to teach their Children what themselves received as the doctrine of Christ; and that the obligation is in all respects equal as if they had believed these things on the account of *oral tradition*.

4. If Children be obliged to believe what their Parents teach them for matters of faith, then upon Mr. S's, own concessions, is not posterity bound to believe something which originally came not from *Christ* or his *Apostles*? For it appears in this case, that the first rise was from a private opinion of some *Doctors* of the *Church*; but they believing these opinions themselves, think themselves obliged to propagate them to others; and by reason of their learning and authority, these opinions

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may by degrees gain a general acceptance in the ruling part of the *Church*; and all who believe them true, think they ought to teach them their *Children*; and Children they are to believe what their Parents teach them. Thus from Mr. S's own *principles*, things that never were delivered by *Christ* or his *Apostles*, may come to be received as matters of faith in the present *Church*. Thus the intelligent Reader needs no bodies help but Mr. S. to let him understand how *Invocation of Saints*, *Purgatory*, *Transubstantiation*, &c. though never delivered either by *Christ* or his *Apostles*, may yet now be looked on as articles of *faith*, and yet no age of the *Church* conspire to deceive another. Either then Mr. S. must say, there never were any *private opinat-
ors* or *speculators* in the *Church*, as dis-
tinct from *testifiers*, and then he un-
avoidably contradicts himself; or he
must deny that posterity is bound to
believe what their fore-fathers deli-
vered them as matters of faith; which
destroys the force of his whole de-
monstration. Perhaps he will an-
swer, that *Children are not bound to be-
lieve*

lieve what barely their Parents, or any other number of persons might deliver as matters of faith, but what the whole *Church* of every age delivers. This, though the only thing to be said in the case, yet is most unreasonable, because it runs men upon inextricable difficulties in the way of their resolving faith. For suppose* any Children taught by their Parents what they are to believe ; Mr. S. must say, they are not bound to believe them presently, but to enquire whether they agree with the whole *Church* of that age first, before they can be obliged to absent. Which being an impossible task either for Children, or men of age, to find out in the way of oral tradition, this way of resolving faith, doth but offer a fairer pretence for infidelity. For we see, how impossible it is for Mr. S. to make it appear, that their *Church* is agreed about the rule of faith ; for by his own confession, the far greater number as *speculators* oppose the way asserted by him ; how much more difficult then must it needs be, to find out what the sense of the whole *essential Church* is in all matters

which Parents may teach their Children for doctrines of faith? So that if Children are not bound to believe what their Parents teach them, till they know they teach nothing but what the whole *Church* teaches, it is the most compendious way to teach them they are not bound to believe at all. But if this distinction be admitted, as Mr. S. makes much use of it, then it appears, how errors may come into the *Church* at first under the notion of *speculations*, and by degrees to be delivered as points of *faith*, by which means those things may be received in the *Church*, for such, which were never delivered by *Christ* or his *Apostles*, and yet no age conspire to deceive the next, which was the thing to be shewed.

§ 7.

This is one way of shewing how errors may come into the *Church*, without one ages conspiring to deceive the next; but besides this, there are several others I might insist upon; but I shall mention only two more: 1. Misinterpreting the sense of *Scripture*. 2. Supposing it in the power of some part of the *Church* to oblige the whole

whole in matters of faith. For the *first* we are to consider, that no imaginable account can be *given* either of the writing or universal reception of the *Books* of the *New Testament*, if they were not designed for the preservation of the doctrine of *Christ*. And although it should be granted possible for the main and fundamental articles of Christian faith (such as the *Apostles Creed* gives a summary account of) to have been preserved by the help of tradition ; yet, unless we be extreamly ungrateful, we cannot but acknowledg, that *God* hath infinitely better provided for us, in not leaving the grounds of our *Religion* to the meer *breath* of the people, or the care of Mothers instructing their *Children* but hath given us the certain records of all the doctrines and motives of faith, preserved inviolably from the first ages of the *Church*. And when the *Church* saw with what care *God* had provided for the means of faith, *oral tradition* was little minded ; thence the memory of those other things not recorded in *Scripture* is wholly lost ; all the care was employed in searching, preserving,

and delivering these *sacred Books* to posterity. To these the primitive *Church* still appeals ; these they plead for against all adversaries, defending their authority, explaining their sense, vindicating them from all corruptions. Tradition they rely not on, any further than as a testimony of the truth of these records, or to clear the sense of them from the perverse interpretation of those *Hereticks* who pretended another kind of tradition than what was in *Scripture*. And when these were silenced, all the disputes that arose in the *Church* concerning matters of faith, was about the sense of these Books ; as is evident by the proceedings in the case of *Arius* and *Pelagius*. Wherein tradition was only used as a means to clear the sense of the *Scriptures*, but not at all as that which the faith of all was to be resolved into. But when any thing was pleaded from tradition, for which there was no ground in *Scripture*, it was rejected with the same ease it was offered ; and such persons were plainly told, this was not the *Churches* way ; if they had plain *Scripture*, with the concurrent sense

sense of *Antiquity*, they might produce it, and rely upon it. So that the whole use of *tradition* in the primitive *Church* (besides attesting the Books) was, to shew the unreasonableness of imposing senses on *Scripture*, against the universal sense of the *Church* from the *Apostles* times. But as long as men were men, it was not avoidable, but they must fall into different apprehensions of the meaning of the *Scripture*, according to their different judgments, prejudices, learning, and education. And since they had all this apprehension, that the *Scripture* contained all doctrines of faith, thence as men judged of the sense of it, they differed in their apprehension, concerning matters of faith. And thence errors and mistakes might easily come into the *Church*, without one age conspiring to deceive the next. Nay if it be possible for men to rely on tradition without *Scripture*, this may easily be done; for by that means they make a new rule of faith, not known to the primitive *Church*, and consequently, that very assertion is an error in which the former age did not con-

spire to deceive the next. And if these things be possible, M. *S.*'s. demonstration fails him ; for hereby a reasonable account is given, how errors may come into a *Church* without one age conspiring to deceive another. Again, let me enquire of Mr. *S.* whether men may not believe it in the power of the ruling part of the *Church*, to oblige the whole to an assent to the definitions of it ? To speak plainer, is it not possible for men to believe the *Pope* and *Council* *infallible* in their *decrees* ? And I hope the *Jesuits* (as little as Mr. *S.* loves them, or they him) may be a sufficient evidence of more than the bare possibility of this. If they may believe this, doth it not necessarily follow, that they are bound to believe whatever they declare to be matter of faith ? Supposing then, that *Transubstantiation*, *Supremacy*, *Invocation of Saints*, were but *private opinions* before, but are now defined by *Pope* and *Council*, these men cannot but look on themselves as much obliged to believe them, as if they had been delivered as matters of faith, in every age since the *Apostles* times. Is it now repugnant to common sense, that

that this opinion should be believed or entertained in the *Church*? if not, why may not this opinion be generally received? if it be so, doth it not unavoidably follow, that the faith of men must alter according to the *Churches* definitions? And thus *private opinions* may be believed as *articles of faith*, and *corrupt practices* be established as *laudable pieces of devotion*, and yet no one age of the *Church* conspire to deceive another. Thus I hope Mr. S. may see how far it is from being a *self-evident principle, that no error can come into the Church, unless one age conspire to deceive the next in a matter of fact, evident in a manner to the whole world*. Which is so wild an apprehension, that I believe the *Jesuits* cannot entertain themselves without smiles, to see their *domestick adversaries* expose themselves to contempt with so much confidence.

Thus I come to the reason I gave, why there is no reason to believe that this is the present sense of the *Roman Church*. My words are, *For I see the Roman Church asserts, that things may*

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be de fide in one age, which were not in another; at least Popes and Councils challenge this; and this is the common doctrine maintained there, and others are looked on as no members of their Church who assert the contrary; but as persons at least meritoriously, if not actually excommunicate. Where then shall I satisfie my self, what the sense of your Church is, as to this particular? Must I believe a very few persons, whom the rest disown as heretical and seditious? or ought I not rather to take the judgment of the greatest and most approved persons of that Church? And these disown any such doctrine; but assert, that the Church may determine things de fide, which were not before. In answer to this Mr. S. begs leave to distinguish the words de fide, which may either mean Christian faith, or points of faith taught by Christ; and then he grants, 'tis nonsense to say, they can be in one age, and not in another. Or de fide may mean obligatory to be believed. In this latter sense none I think (faith he) denies things may be de fide in one age and not in another; in the former sense none holds it. Upon which very triumphantly

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phantly he concludes, *What's now become of your difficulty? I believe you are in some wonderment, and think I elude it rather then answer it; I shall endeavour to unperplex you.* I must confess it a fault of humane nature, to admire things which men understand not; on which account I cannot free my self from some temptation to that he calls *wonderment*; but I am presently cured of it, when I endeavour to reduce his distinction to reason. For instead of explaining his terms, he should have shewed how any thing can be obligatory to be believed in any age of the *Church*, which was no point of faith taught by *Christ*, which notwithstanding his endeavour to *unperplex me*, is a thing as yet I apprehend not; because I understand no obligation to faith to arise from any thing but *divine revelation*; and I do not yet believe any thing in *Christian doctrine* to be divinely revealed, but what was delivered by *Christ* or his *Apostles*. And my *wonderment* must needs be the greater; because I suppose this inconsistent with Mr. S's. principles. For oral tradition doth necessarily imply, that

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that all points of *faith* were first taught by *Christ*, and conveyed by tradition to us ; but if a thing may be *defide* in this latter sense, which was not before, what becomes of resolving faith wholly into *oral tradition*? For *faith* is resolved into that from whence the *obligation* to *believe* comes ; but here Mr. *S.* confesses, that the obligation to believe doth arise from something quite different from *oral tradition* ; and therefore faith must be resolved into it. Besides, all the sense I can find in that distinction, is, that men are bound to believe something in one age, which they were not in another ; and if so, I shall desire Mr. *S.* to *unperplex me* in this, how every age is bound to believe just as the precedent did, and yet one age be bound to believe more than the precedent. But however, I am much obliged to him for his endeavour to *unperplex me* as he speaks ; for really I look on no civilities to be greater than those which are designed for clearing our understandings ; so great an adorer am I of true reason and an intelligible Religion. And therefore I perfectly agree with

with him in his saying, that *Christianity* p. 206. aims not to make us beasts, but more perfectly men ; and the perfection of our manhood consists in the use of our reasons. From whence he infers, that it is reasonable, consequences should be drawn from principles of faith, which, he saith, are of two sorts ; first such as need no more but common sense to deduce them ; the others are such as need the maxims of some science got by speculation to infer them ; and these are *Theological conclusions* : The former sort, he tell us, the Church is necessitated to make use of upon occasion, i. e. when any Heretick questions those, and eadem opera, the whole point of faith it self, of which they were a part ; as in the case of the Monothelites, about Christ's having two wills. But all this while, I am far enough from being *unperplexed* ; nay by this discourse, I see every one who offers to *unperplex* another, is not very *clear* himself. For since he makes no *Theological conclusions* to be *de fide*, but only such *consequences* as *common sense* draws, I would willingly understand how *common sense* receives a new obligation to faith. For to my
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apprehension the deducing of consequences from principles by *common sense*, is not an act of believing, but of knowldg consequent upon a principle of faith. And the meaning is no more than this, that men, when they say they believe things, should not contradict themselves, as certainly they would do, if they deny those *consequences* which *common sense* draws from them. As in the case of the *Monotheites*, for men to assert that *Christ* had *two natures*, and yet not *two wills*; when the *will* is nothing else but the inclination of the *nature* to that *good* which belongs to it. So that there can be no distinct obligation to believe such *consequences* as are drawn by *common sense*; but every one that believes the *principles* from whence they are drawn, is thereby bound to believe all the consequences which immediately follow from them. Indeed the *Church*, when people will be so unreasonable to deny such things, may explain her sense of the article of faith in those terms which may best prevent dispute; but this is only to discriminate the persons who truly believe this article, from such

such as do not. Not that any new obligation to faith results from this act of the *Church*; but the better to prevent cavils, she explains her sense of the article it self in more explicite terms. *Which, as he faith, is only to put the faith out of danger of being equivocated.* Which is quite another thing from causing a new obligation to believe. As suppose the *Church*, to prevent the growth of the *Socinian doctrine*, should require from men the declaring their belief of the *eternal existence* of the *Son of God*; Would this be to bind men to believe some thing which they were not bound to before? No, but only to express their assent to the *Deity* of Christ in the simplest terms; because otherwise they might call him *God* by *office*, and not by *nature*. Now how can any one conceive, that any should be first obliged to believe, that *Christ* is *God*, and yet receive a new obligation afterwards to believe his *eternal existence*? Thus it is in all *immediate consequences* drawn by *common sense*; in all which, the primary obligation to believe the thing it self, extends to the belief of

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it in the most clear and least controverred terms, which are not intended to impose on mens faith, but to promote the *Churches* peace. For neither is there a new object of faith ; for how can that be, which common sense draws from what is believed already ? neither is there any *infallible proponent*, unless common sense hath usurped the *Popes* prerogative. But Mr. S. offers at a reason for this, which is, *that none can have an obligation to believe what they have not an obligation to think of ; and in some age the generality of the faithful have no occasion, nor consequently obligation to mind, reflect, or think on those propositions involved in the main stock of faith.* From whence, he saith, it follows, *that a thing may be de fide, or obligatory to be believed in one age, and not in another.* But let Mr. S. shew, how a man can be obliged to believe any thing as an article of faith, who is not bound to think of all the immediate consequences of it ? Because faith is an act of a reasonable nature, which ought to enquire into the reasons and consequences of things which it doth believe. But

Mr.

Mr. S's mistake lies here, in not distinguishing the obligation to believe from the obligation to an explicite declaration of that assent. The former comes only from God, and no new obligation can arise from any act of the *Church*; but the latter being a thing tending to the *Churches* peace, may be required by it on some occasions; *i. e.* when the doctrine is assaulted by *Hereticks*, as in the time of the *four first General Councils*; but still a man is not at all the more obliged to assent, but to express his assent in order to the *Churches* satisfaction.

But Mr. S. supposes me to enquire, *how the Church can have power to oblige the generality to belief of such a point.* To which his answer is, *she obliges them to believe the main point of faith, by virtue of traditions, being a self-evident rule, and these implied points by virtue of their being self-evidently connected with those main and perpetually used points, so that the vulgar can be rationally and connaturally made capable of this their obligation.* But we are not now enquiring, what the obligation to believe the main points of

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p. 208.

faith

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faith is, nor whether tradition be a *self-evident rule*; but how there should be a new obligation to believe something *self-evidently connected with the former points*, is beyond my capacity to understand. And they must be *vulgar understandings* indeed, that can *rationally and connaturally* be made capable of such an obligation. For if it be *self-evidently connected* with the main points, no one can believe the one, without believing the other; for nothing is *self-evident*, but what a man assents to at the first apprehension of it; and if he doth so, how comes there a new obligation to believe it? Is it possible to believe, that any thing consists of *parts*, and not believe that *that whole is greater than any of those parts*? for this is a thing *self-evidently connected* with the nature of the *whole*. But these are *self-evident riddles*, as the former were *unintelligible demonstrations*. And yet, though these be rare *Theories*, the application of them to the case of the *Roman Church* exceeds all the rest. *Whence*, saith he, *the Government of our Church is still justified to be sweet, and according to right nature, and yet forcible and efficacious.*

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Although I admire many things in Mr. S's Book, yet I cannot say I do any thing more than this passage, that because men are obliged to believe no implied points, but such as are self-evidently connected with the main ones, therefore the Government of the Roman Church is sweet, and according to right nature, &c. Alas then, how much have we been mistaken all this while, that have charged her with imposing hard and unsufferable conditions of communion with her! No, she is so gentle and sweet, that she requires nothing but the main points on the account of a self-evident rule, and implied points by reason of self-evident connexion with the former. I see Mr. S. (if he will make good his word) is the only person who is ever like to reconcile me with the Church of Rome: For I assure you, I never desire any better terms of communion with a Church, than to have no main points of faith required from me to assent to, but what are built on a self-evident rule, nor any implied points but such as are self-evidently connected with the former. And no work can be more easie, than to convince me up-

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on these grounds ; for all endeavors of proof are taken away by the things being said to be *self-evident*. For the very offer of proof that they are so, *self-evidently proves* they are not so : For what ever is proved by somthing beside it self, can never be said without a contradiction to be *self-evident*. But not to tye up Mr. S. from his excellent faculty of proving, if Mr. S. will prove to me that any of the points in difference between us, as *Transubstantiation, Purgatory, Supremacy of the Roman Church, &c.* have any *self-evident connexion* with any main point of faith in the *Apostles Creed*, I solemnly promise him to retract all I have writ against that *Church* ; so far shall I be from needing a new obligation to believe them. But if these be so remote from *self-evidence*, that they are plainly repugnant to sense and reason (witness that *self-evident doctrine of Transubstantiation*) what then must we think of Mr. S. ? Surely the least is, that since his being a *Roman Catholick*, his mind is strangely inlightned, so far that those things are *self-evident* to him, which are contradictions to the rest of the world.

world. But withal M. S. acquaints us with another mysterie ; which is, *how these points descended by a kind of tradition, and yet confesses, they were never thought of or reflected on by the generality, till the Church took occasion to explain them.* Such a silent tradition doth very suitably follow the former self-evident connexion. For he that can believe *Transubstantiation* to be self-evident, no wonder if he believes that to have been delivered by a constant Tradition, which was never heard of from the *Apostles times to these.*

Now Mr. S. is pleased to return to me, and draws up a fresh charge against me, which is, *that I act like a Politician, and would conquer them by first dividing them, and making odious comparisons between two parties of Divines.* But to shew us how little they differ, he distinguishes them, as faithful, and as private discoursers ; in the former notion, he saith, *they all hold the same divinely constituted Church-Government, and the same self-evident rule of faith;* but as private discoursers he acknowledges they differ in the explication of

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their belief. I meddle not here with the Government of their *Church*, (which I have elsewhere proved to be far enough from being *divinely constituted*) but with the *rule of faith*; and the question is, whether the *infallibility of oral tradition*, be that *self-evident rule* which that *Church* proceeds on; Yes, saith Mt. S. *they are all as faithful agreed in it, but as discourses they differ* about it. Which in short is, that all in the *Church of Rome*, who are not of his opinion, know not what they say; and that they oppose that which they do really believe. Which in plain *English* is, that they are egregious dissemblers and prevaricators in *Religion*; that they do intolerably flatter the *Pope* and *present Church* with loud declamations for their infallibility, but they do really believe no such thing, but resolve all into oral tradition. But is not this an excellent agreement among them, when Mr. *White* and his party not only disown the common doctrine of the infallibility of *Pope* and *Councils*, but dispute against it as pernicious and destructive to *Christian faith*? on the other side the far

far greater part of *Romanists* say, there can be no certainty of faith, unless there be an *infallible* divine testimony in the *present Church*, and this lodged in *Pope* and *Councils*; that those who endeavour to overthrow this, are *dangerous, seditious, heretical persons*, Accordingly their Books are censured at *Rome*, their opinions disputed against, and their persons condemned. And yet all this while, we must believe that *these* stick together like two smooth Marbles *as faithful*, though they are knocked one against another *as discoursers*; and that they perfectly agree in the same *self-evident rule of faith*, when all their quarrels and contentions are about it; and those managed with so great heat, that *heresie* is charged of one side, and *Arch-heresie* and *undermining Religion* on the other. Doth he think we never heard of Mr. White's *Sonus Succinæ*, nor of that *Chapter* in it, where he saith, *that the doctrine of Pope and Councils infallibility tends to overthrow the certainty of Christian faith*; and that the propagating such a doctrine is a greater crime than burning Temples, ravishing the sacred Virgins on the Altars, trampling

De fide &
Theol. tract.
2. sect. 22.
p. 158.

pling on the body of Christ, or the sending the Turk or Antichrist into Christian Countreys ? Or doth he think we can believe that the Pope and Cardinals, the Jesuites and all the Papists of forreign Countreys do *as faithful* agree with Mr. White in this ? It seems not so by the proceedings in the *Court of Rome* against him, in which as appears by the censure of the *Inquisition* against him, dated 17. November 1661. his doctrine is condemned not only as *false, seditious and scandalous*, but as *heretical and erroneous in faith*. And if it were not for this very doctrine he was there censured, why doth Mr. White set himself purposely to defend it in his *Tabulae suffragiales* ? If these then do agree *as faithful*, who cannot but envy the excellent harmony of the *Roman Church*, in which men condemn each other for *hereticks*, and yet all believe the same things still ? Well Sir, I am in hopes upon the same grounds Mr. S. will yield us the same charity too, and tell us that we agree with him *as faithful*, only we differ a little from him *as discoursers* ; for I assure you, there is *as great reason*: the only difference is, we give them not such

such ill words as they do each other. For let Mr. S. shew us wherein we differ more from him about the *Rule of Faith*, than they do among themselves: For Mr. White when he hath said, *that all kind of heresie doth arise from hence, that men make the holy Scripture, or a private spirit, the rule of faith*; he presently adds, *it is all one, if one make Councils or Pope any other way than as witnesses to be the authors of faith*. For, saith he, *this is to subject the whole Church to that slavery, to receive any error for an article of faith, which they shall define, or propose modo illegitimo, i. e. any other way then as witnesses of tradition*. Either then we differ from Mr. S. only as discoursers, or he and his Brethren differ from each other more then as such. And so any one would think who reads the oppositions and arguments against each other on this subject, particularly Mr. White's *Tabulæ suffragiales*. But let Mr. White say what he will Mr. S. tells me, *I am not aware how little they differ even as Divines*. The more shame for them to have such furious heats and oppositions where there is

so little difference. But as little as they differ, Mr. *White* thinks it safer to talk of their unity in *England*, than to try whether they be of his mind at *Rome*, by going thither to clear himself; for he justly fears he should find them differ from him some other way than *as bare discoursers*. Yet let us hear Mr. *S*'s. reason; for, saith he, though some speculators attribute to the Churh a power of defining things not held before, yet few will say she hath new revelations or new articles of faith. But we know the temper of these men better than to rely on what they barely say. For they say what they think is most for their purpose; and one of Mr. *White*'s adversaries, (if himself may be credited) plainly told him, if the doctrine of the Popes infallibility were not true, yet it ought to be defended because it was for the interest of the Church of Rome: for which he is sufficiently rebuked by him. It is one thing then what they say, and another what necessarily follows from the Doctrine which they assert. But for plain dealing commend me to the *Cinonists*, who say expressly, the *Church* (by which they

Tabul. sup.
rag. p. 3. 18.

they mean the *Pope*) may make *new articles of faith* : and this is the sense of the rest, though they are loth to speak out. Else Mr. *White* was much too blame in spending so much time in proving the contrary. But what man of common sense can imagine that these men can mean otherwise, who assert such an infallibility in *Pope* and *Councils*, as to oblige men under pain of eternal damnation to believe those things which they were not obliged to, before such a definition ? And what can this be else but to make new articles of faith ? For an article of faith supposes a necessary obligation to believe it : now if some doctrine may become thus obligatory by virtue of the *Churches* definition which was not so before, that becomes thereby an article of faith which it was not before. But these subtil men have not yet learnt to distinguish a *new doctrine* from a *new article of faith* : they do not indeed pretend that their doctrine is new, because they deny any such thing as new revelation in the *Church* ; but yet they must needs say, if they understand themselves, that old implicit

plicit doctrines, may become new articles of faith by vertue of the *Churches* definition. So little are they relieved by that silly distinction of *explicit* and *implicit delivery* of them, which Mr. S. for a great novelty acquaints us with. For what is only *implicitly delivered*, is no article of faith at all : for that can be no article of faith, which men are not bound to believe ; now there are none will say that men are bound to believe under pain of damnation if they do not the things which are only implicitly delivered ; but this they say with great confidence of all things defined by the *Church*. And let now any intelligent person judg ; whether those who assert such things, do not differ wide enough from those who resolve all into *oral tradition*, and make the obligation to faith wholly dependent upon the constant tradition of any doctrine from age to age ever since the *Apostles* times.

§. 11.

But Mr. S. is yet further displeased with me for saying, *that Pope and Councils challenge a power to make things de fide in one age, which were not in another*

another. For 1. he sayes, *I speak it in common, and prove it not.* 2. He adds, *That take them right, this is both perfectly innocent, and unavoidably necessary to a Church.* And is it not strange he should expect any particular proots of so innocent and necessary a thing to the being of a *Church*? But he will tell me it is in his own sense of *de fide*, which I have already shewn to signify nothing to his purpose. Let him therefore speak out whether he doth believe any such thing as inherent infallibility in the definitions of *Pope* and *Councils*? if not, I am sure at *Rome* they will never believe that Mr. *S.* agrees with them *as faithful*; if he doth, whether doth not such an infallible definition bind men by virtue of it to the belief of what is then defined? if it doth, then things may become as much *de fide* by it, as if they were delivered dy *Christ* or his *Apostles*. For thereby is supposed an equal obligation to faith, because there is a proposition equally infallible. But will he say, the *Pope* doth not challenge this? Why then is the contrary doctrine censured and condemned at *Rome*?

Rome ? Why is the other so eagerly contended for, by the most zealous sons of that *Church*, and that not as a *school-opinion*, but as the only certain *foundation* of *faith* ? Mr. S. is yet pleased to inform me further, *that nothing will avail me but this, if a Pope and Council should define a new thing, and declare they ground themselves on new lights, as did their first reformers in England : but I shall find, he saith, no such fopperies in faith-definitions made by the Catholick Church.* Is this the man who made choice of reason for his weapon ? could there be a greater calumny cast on our *Church*, than to say *her reformers grounded themselves on new lights* : when our great charge against the *Church of Rome* is for introducing *Novelties*, and receding from pure and primitive antiquity. Whether the charge be true or no, yet sure it follows they did not declare *they ground themselves on new lights*; but expressly the contrary. Well, *but Pope and Councils neither define new things, nor ground themselves on them* : but what means the man of reason ? that they make no new definitions : surely not

not ; for then what did they meet for ? and what mean their decrees ? but he intends, that they deliver no new doctrine : but how must that be tried ? or hath Mr. S. gained the opinion of infallibility both from *Pope* and *Councils*, that we must believe his bare word ? but we not only say but prove that even their last *Council* hath defined many things, which never were delivered by *Christ* or his *Apostles*. And it is to no purpose whether they say *they ground themselves on new lights*, or pretend to an *infallible assistance* ; for it comes all to the same at last. For if the assistance be infallible, what matter is it whether the doctrine hath been revealed or no ? for on this supposition it is impossible that *Pope* and *Council* should miscarry. Therefore if any *Church* be guilty of *fopperies* in faith-definitions, it must be that which you miscall *the Catholick*, but is more truly known by the name of the *Roman Church*. There is yet one piece of Mr. S's. sagacity to be taken notice of as to this particular, which is, *that I p. 210. am at an end of my argument, because I say the opinion of the Pope and Councils in-*

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infallibility is the common doctrine maintained: in which I confound the Church with the schools, or some private opinioners, and then carp at those mens tenets, And this is the force of all that Paragraph, He tells me, *I want not wit to know that no sober Catholick holds humane deductions the rule of their faith, schoolmen definers of it, nor the schools the Tribunal whence to propose it authoritatively and obligingly to the generality of the faithful.* Neither doth Mr. S. want the wit to know that our present enquiry is concerning the sense of their present Church about the rule of faith. Since then Mr. S. must confess it necessary to faith to know what the certain rule of it is; let me enquire further, whether any particular person can know certainly what it is, unless he knows what the *Church* owns for her rule of faith; and whether that may be owned as the *Churches* judgement, which is stiffly opposed by the most interessed persons in the *Roman Church*, and the most zealous contenders for it? Especially when the *Pope* who is said to be *Head of the Church*, condemns the doctrine

ctrine asserted, and that only by a small number of such who are as much opposed by themselves, as by any of us. Is it then possible to know the *Churches* judgement or not? if not, 'tis to no purpose to search for a *rule of faith*: if it be, which way can we come to know it, either by most *voices* or the sense of the *Governours* of the *Church*; either of the ways, I dare put it to a fair tryal whether *oral tradition*, or the *infallibility* of *Pope* and *Councils* be the *Doctrine* most owned in the *Church of Rome*? But Mr. *S.* still tells us, *these are only private opinators and schoolmen who assert the contrary doctrine to his.* But wiill not they much more say on the other side, that this way of *oral tradition* is a novel fancy of some few *half-Catholicks* in *England*, and tends to subvert the *Roman Church*. But is the present *Pope* with Mr. *S.* a *private opinator*, or was the last a *meer schoolman*? I am sure what ever Mr. *S.* thinks of him, he thought not so of himself, when he said, *he was no Divine* in the controversie of *Jansenius*. Doth the *Court of Rome* signifie no more with Mr. *S.* than

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a company of *scholaſtick Pedants*, that know not what the sense of the *Church* is, concerning the rule of faith? I meddle not with the *Schools* but with the authority of the *present Church*, and him whom Mr. *S.* owns for the *head* of it: and is it consistent with his *headship* to condemn that doctrine which contains in it the only certain *rule of faith*? Mr. *S.* may then see they were no such impertinent *Topicks* which I insisted on, and as stout as Mr. *S.* seems to be, I am apt to believe he would not look on the censure of the *Inquisition* as an impertinent *Topick*.

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But at last Mr. *S.* offers at something whereby he would satisfie me of the sense of the *Church*, as to this particular, and therefore asks, whether *I never heard of such a thing as the Council of Trent?* I must ingenuously confess I have; and seen more a great deal of it, than *I* am satisfied with. But what of that? *there*, he tells me, *I may find a clear solution of my doubt by the constant procedure of that most grave Synod in its definitions.* That is,

is, I hope to find that oral tradition was acknowledged there as the only *self-evident* rule of faith. If I do this, I confess my self satisfied in this enquiry. But how much to the contrary is there very obvious in the proceedings of it ? For in the 4th Session the Decree is, *That Scripture and tradition should be embraced with equal piety and reverence* ; and the reason is, *because the doctrine of faith is contain'd partly in Scripture, partly in tradition* ; but what arts must Mr. S. use to infer from hence, that *oral tradition* in contradistinction to *Scripture* was looked on as the only rule of faith ? I cannot but say, that the ruling men of that *Council* were men wise enough in their *generation* ; and they were too wise wholly to exclude *Scripture* ; but because they knew *that* of it self could not serve their purposes, they therefore help it out with *tradition*, and make both together the *compleat rule of faith*. Where I pray in all the proceedings of that *Council* doth Mr. S. find them define any thing on the account of *oral tradition* ? instead of which we find continual bandyings

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about the sense of *Scripture* and *Fathers*, which might have been all spared, if they had been so wise as to consider, they could not but know the sense of the *present Church*, nor that of the *precedent*, and so up to the time of *Christ*. But they were either so ignorant as not to light on this happy invention; or so wise and knowing as to despise it. It is true, they would not have their *doctrines* looked on as *novelties*, therefore they speak much of *tradition* and the *ancient faith*; but that was not by what their *Parents* taught them, but what the *Fathers* of the *Church* delivered in their writings; for by these they judged of *traditions*, and not the *oral* way. And therefore I see little reason to believe, that this was either the sense of the *Council of Trent*, or is the sense of any number of *Roman Catholicks*, much less of the *whole Church, none excepted*, as Mr. S. in his confident way expresses it. *And if he will*, as he *faith*, *disavow the maintaining any point, or affecting any way which is not assented to by all*, I hope to see Mr. S. retract this opinion, and either fall in with the *Court of Rome*,

or return, as reason leads him, into the bosom of the *Church of England*. But there seems to be somewhat more in what follows, *viz.* that though schoolmen question the personal infallibility of the Pope, or of the Roman Clergy, nay of a General Council, yet all affirm the infallibility of tradition, or the living voice of the *Church essential*; and this, he faith, is held by all, held firmly, and that it is absolutely infallible. To this therefore I answer, either Mr. S. means, that none do affirm that the universal tradition of the *Church essential* can err, or that the *Church of Rome*, being the *Church essential*, cannot err in her tradition: But which way soever he takes it, I shall easily shew how far it is from proving that he designs it for. For if he take it in the first sense, *viz.* that all the faithful in all ages could not concur in an error, then he may as well prove *Protestants* of his mind as *Papists*, for this is the foundation on which we believe the particular Books of *Scripture*. If this therefore proves any thing, it proves more then he intends, *viz.* that while we thus oppose each other, we do per-

fectly agree together; and truly so we do, as much as they do among themselves. But if Mr. S's. meaning be, *that all of their Religion own the Roman Church to be the Church essential, and on that account, that it cannot err*, (setting aside the absurdity of the opinion it self), I say from hence it doth not follow, that they make *oral tradition* the rule of *faith*, because it is most evident, that the ground why they say their *Church* cannot err, is not on Mr. S's. *principles*, but on the supposition of an *infallible assistance*, which preserves that *Church* from error. So that this falls far short of proving, that they are all agreed in this rule of *faith*; which is a thing so far from probability, that he might, by the same argument prove, that *Scripture* is owned by them all to be the rule of *faith*. For I hope *it is held by all*, and *held firmly*, that the living voice of *God* in *Scripture*, as delivered to us, is *infallible*; and if so, then there is as much ground for this as the other. But if we enquire what it is men make a *rule of faith*, we must know not only that they believe *tradition infallible*, but on what account they do

do so. For if tradition be believed *infallible* barely on the account of a promise of *infallibility* to the *present Church*, then the resolution of faith is not into the *tradition*, but into that *infallible assistance*; and consequently the rule of faith is not, what bare tradition delivers, but what that *Church*, which cannot err in judging tradition, doth propose to us. It is not therefore their being agreed in *general*, that *tradition is infallible*, doth make them agree in the same *rule of faith*; but they must agree in the ground of that *infallibility*, *viz.* that it depends on this, that *no age could conspire to deceive the next*. But all persons who understand any thing of the *Roman Church*, know very well that the general reason why tradition is believed infallible, is, because they first believe the *Church* to be *infallible*; whereas Mr. S. goes the contrary way, and makes the *infallibility* of the *the Church*, to depend on the *infallibility of tradition*. And therefore, for all that I can see, we must still oppose *private Opinators* in this *controversie*; the *Church of Rome*, not having declared her self at all

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on Mr. S's behalf, but the contrary, and the generality believing on the account of the present *Churches* infallibility. And it is strange Mr. S. should find no difference between mens resolving faith into common sense, and into the immediate assistance of the *Holy Ghost*. If this then be the *first principle of controversie*, as Mr. S. pretends, we see how unlikely they are to agree about other matters, who are so much divided about the principle of resolving them. And if this be the ground of faith, then most *Romanists* build on a wrong Foundation. But if the *infallibility of oral tradition* be the foundation on which *that formidable structure is erecting*, which he speaks of, wo then to the *Court of Rome*, for that is known to build on quite a different foundation. And if this, as he saith, *rises apace, and has advanced many stories in a small time*, it only lets us know how fast their divisions grow, and that they are building so fast one against another, that their *Church* will not stand between them. By this discourse, Mr. S. pretends to answer all those *If's* which follow;

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low ; which are these, *In case the Church may determine things de fide, which were not before, whether the present Church doth then believe as the precedent did or no ? if it did, how comes any thing to be de fide which was not before ? if it did not, what assurance can I have that every age of the Church believes just as the precedent did, and no otherwise ; when I see they profess the contrary ? And if a thing may be de fide in one age, which was not in a foregoing, then a Church may deliver that as a matter of faith at one time, which was never accounted so before ; by which means the present Church may oblige me to believe that as a matter of faith, which never was so in Christ's or the Apostles times, and so the infallibility on the account of tradition is destroyed.* To all which Mr. S. gives a very easie answer, *viz.* that they do not hold any disparate or unimplied points of faith ; but such as are involved and implied in the main point. This is no more easily said then understood; for if these be implied in the former, how can there come a new obligation to believe them ? For to take his own instance,

will any man in his senses say, that he that believes *homo est animal rationale*, doth not believe *homo est animal*? and this he makes choice of as an example, *how one point of faith may be involved in another, so as to receive a distinct obligation to believe it.* I grant that *homo est animal* is involved in the other, but he that shall say, that after he hath assented to that proposition, *homo est animal rationale*, he may be capable of a new obligation to believe the former, which is involved in this, it may be justly questioned whether such an one, as to himself, can truly say, *homo est animal rationale*, or no. But after such rare subtleties, he doth very well to tell me, *that I ought to consider what Logick tells us, that the conclusion is in the premises, which reflection (in his his court-like expression) he saith, will much unblunder my thoughts.* But let the conclusion be as long as it will in the *premises*, will any man in his wits say, that he that believes the *truth* of the *premises*, is not hereby bound to believe the conclusion? and the more the one is involved in the other, the less is it possible

possible to make the obligation to believe them distinct. And it is hard for me to believe, that this is a way *to un-blunder my thoughts*, when I see what horrible confusion such expressions argue in his own. Let the *Church* then clear her thoughts never so much, yet all this cannot amount to a distinct obligation to believe those things which were involved before, but to a more explicit declaring them for the *Churches* peace and satisfaction. The only conclusion then involved in these premises, is, that if some things may be *de fide* in one age which were not in another, then the present age may believe otherwise than the precedent did. And if this doctrine be held in the *Church of Rome*, nothing can be more evident, than that Mr. S's. *first principle of controversie*, is far from being the doctrin of the *Roman Church*, which was the thing to be proved.

My second chief argument against this way of *oral tradition* was, *that it had not been owned in all ages of the Christian Church*; to manifest which, I enquired into the reason of the obligation

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gation in any age of the *Church* to believe and practise just as the precedent did. Mr. S. rejoices in that confession of mine, that *the only thing to be proved in this case is, that every age of the Church, and all persons in it, look'd on themselves as obliged not to vary in any thing from the doctrine and practise of the precedent age.* And I there offer the choice of three ways to prove it, *reason, testimony, or tradition;* he tells me, he excepts *the way of reason;* yet quarrels with me for pressing for a *demonstrative medium* to prove it, when yet Mr. S. seldom speaks under the rate of *demonstrations.* But he thereby notes *the unconsonancy of my carriage,* Wherein I wonder? That I should desire them to perform this promise, *viz.* to give us *demonstrations* for the grounds of faith? But faith withal, *he will yeild me the honour of professing I have no demonstration but probability for the ground of mine,* and he makes this serious protestation for himself, that *he should esteem himself very dishonest, did he assert and press on others any argument for the ground of his faith, which he judged not evident, that is de-*

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demonstrative. What is it these men mean, when they cry up their own way for *demonstrative*, and say that we build our faith meerly on *probabilities*? Do they say, that *Religion* is capable of strict and rigorous *demonstration*? If so, let them demonstrate the *being* of *God* and *immortality* of the *soul*, with as much evidence, as that the *three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles*. And it is strange, if they think *particular problems* in religion are more capable of *demonstration* than those *Theorems* on which they are built. But by all the enquiry I can make, all the difference between us is, that Mr. *S.* will have that called a *demonstration*, which is scarce a *probability*; and we call that *sufficient reason*, which any wise man may safely rely on in matters of *Religion*. In the mean time how much do we suffer by our modesty, that because we speak not as big as Mr. *S.* does, we must be censured presently to have nothing but *probabilities* for our faith? Are those bare *probabilities* which leave no suspicion of doubt behind them? And such we freely assert the grounds of our *Religion* to do; *i. e.* I assert, that

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we have the highest actual certainty of the truth of our *Religion*, which the mind of any reasonable man can desire; and if Mr. S's. *demonstrations* can do any more than this, let him tell us what it is. For my part, I know nothing higher in the mind of man than *a certain assent*, and if I did not think there was the greatest ground in *Religion* for that, I abhor dissimulation so much, that I should leave off perswading men to embrace it. And if any men have made us shy of the word *demonstration* and *infallibility*, they are such men as Mr. S. have done it, who talk of these things, when their arguments fall beneath some of the remotest *probabilities* we insist on. Nay, if there be any force in his *demonstration*, as to matters of fact, it hath been used by us long before his Book saw the light. But we love to give the true names to things, and not to lose our credit with all intelligent persons, by playing *Mountebanks* in *Religion*, crying up those things for *infallible cures*, which an ordinary capacity may discern the insufficiency of. But was it any thing but justice and reason in me to expect and

and call for a *demonstration* from them who talk of nothing under it ? And therefore I said, *that it was impossible to demonstrate this way of oral tradition, unless it were proved impossible for men not to think themselves obliged to believe and do all just as their predecessors did.* For where the contrary is not only possible, but easily supposable, as that men may believe those things, as new articles of faith which are defined by *Pope and Council*, I wonder how Mr. S. will demonstrate, that men must look on themselves as obliged to believe just as their predecessors did ? For I had thought demonstrations had never place in contingent propositions ; but it seems Mr. S. who tells me, *Logick will unblunder my thoughts*, intends to make a new one for me. And I assure you so he had need, before I shall ever call his arguments demonstrations : and although he thinks himself *very honest* in calling them so, yet I should think him much *wiser* if he did not.

But before I come to the particular debate of these things, I freely tell him

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him, that I grant all he requests; I shall take along with me the nature of the matter in hand, the doctrines and practices spoken of, the manner of delivering them, the necessary circumstances which give weight to both; yet for all these, I cannot look on his way as *demonstrative*. And that both our meanings may be better understood, it is very necessary the Reader should have a true account of the state of the Question between us. And if he will believe me, I never intended to dispute with him or any one else, *whether men were bound to wear their clothes, or build houses, or manage estates just as their predecessors did*; but whether every age is obliged to believe and practise just as the precedent did, by virtue of *meer oral tradition*; for about that is all the controversie between us. I do not deny, but that a succeeding age may look on it self as bound to believe what the precedent did; but whether that obligation doth arise purely from the delivery of that doctrine by the precedent in the way of *tradition*, is the thing in dispute between us. For in case the ground of

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faith

faith be wholly the written Word, conveyed from age to age, I deny not but an obligation to believe descends with the doctrine to every succeeding age. But that which Mr. S. is to prove is, *that abstractly from Scripture every age is absolutely bound to believe just as the precedent did*, without any enquiry whether that doctrine doth agree with *Scriptures* or no; but that he is therefore bound to believe all which is proposed to him, because it was the doctrine of the immediately preceding age. And this is that which I deny, and desire Mr. S. to prove. For which he first gives us a large instance in historical matters, and then comes to the matters of *Christian* faith. His instance is, *in Alexanders conquest of Asia, as to which he saith, that the memory of it is p. 218. fresh and lively, though some thousand years since; and that the universal and strong persuasion of this matter of fact was not caused by Books, as Curtius his History, but by human tradition; that the continuance of this persuasion was the notoriety of the fact to the then living, which obliged them to relate it to their posterity, and that this testifying*

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by the fore-fathers, was that which obliged posterity to believe things, as true because there could be no imaginable motive why the whole world should conspire to deceive them, or be deceivable in their sensations; on which principle it passed to the next age, and so came down by way of tradition to our dayes; & the obligation to believe in every age depended upon this, that the senses of the first could not be deceived; and having this security in every age, that no one would conspire to deceive the next, it follows, that no age could say a former age testified so, unless it did; so therefore, saith he, it follows demonstratively, that it was testified; and so the descendants in every age to the very end of the world have the same obligation to believe their immediate fore-fathers, saying it was testified by theirs, and so to the very first, who were witnesses of his actions. This is the substance of what he more largely discourses in several Paragraphs; which when he hath done, he tells me, he expects what I will reply to this discourse. Not to frustrate therefore his expectation, and in order to the Readers satisfaction, we are to consider, that

that in the present case there are two distinct questions to be resolved: 1. How a *matter of fact* evident to the world comes to be conveyed to posterity? 2. By what means a compleat history of all passages relating to it may be conveyed? As to the first, I grant that a *fact* so notorious as *Alexanders conquest of Asia* might have been preserved by human tradition, and conveyed in a certain way from one age to another. But if we enquire into that which is alone proper to our question, *viz.* by what means we may judg what is *true* and *false* as to the *particulars* of that *conquest*, then I deny that bare *tradition* is to be relied on in this case. For the certainty of conveyance of ali *paticulars* doth depend not upon the *bare veracity*, but the *capacity* and *skill* of *communicating* from one age to another. For which one would think we need no clearer evidence than the consideration of the different account of former *times* in the several *Nations* of the world. For who can imagine, but the *barbarous Nations* were as unwilling to deceive their posterity as any other? yet we

see a vast difference in the *histories* of former *ages* among them, and more civilized people. And I wish Mr. *S.* would rather have instanced in some history which had been preserved merely by tradition, and not in such a one, which, if any other, hath been most carefully recorded and propagated to posterity. If Mr. *S.* would have undertaken to have told us, who they were that first peopled *America*, and from what place they came, by the *tradition* of the present inhabitants, and what famous actions had been done there in former ages, we might have thought indeed, that *sole tradition* had been a very safe way to convey matters of fact from one age to another. But since all Mr. *S.*'s arguments will hold as well for the *Scythians* and *Americans*, and the most barbarous Nations, as the most civil and polite; what reason can Mr. *S.* give, why there is not among them as certain an account of former ages, as among the *Greeks* and *Romans*? Were not their *senses*, who saw those matters of fact, as incapable of being *deceived* as others? Was not every age among

among them as unwilling to deceive their posterity as elsewhere? Yet notwithstanding the force of Mr. S's demonstration, we see for want of *letters* how grossly ignorant they are of what was done before them. And if this principle were true, why have we not as true an account of the *eldest* ages of the world, as of any other? Nay, why were *letters* invented, and writing ever used, if tradition had been found so infallible? But it is one thing superficially to discourse what is impossible should be otherwise, and another to consider what really hath been in the world. Doth not the constant experience of all times prove, that where any *history* hath not been timely recorded, it hath been soon corrupted by notorious falsities, or obscured by fabulous reports? As we see among our selves, what difference there is in point of certainty between the several stories of K. *Arthur* and *William the Conqueror*; what will Mr. S. say, that those who lived in K. *Arthur's* time could not know what he did, or that they conspired to deceive their posterity? But if tra-

dition be so *infallible*, why have we not the ancient story of *Britain* as exact as the modern? If Mr. S. will impute it to the *peoples ignorance, want of letters, frequent conquests by other Nations, and succeeding barbarism*, he may easily find how many ways there are for *matters of fact* to be soon lost or corrupted, when they have not been diligently preserved by authentick records; and that without one age conspiring to deceive another. But notwithstanding Mr. S's confidenee, I cannot think it possible for Mr. S. to believe, that we should have had as true an account of *Alexanders conquest of Asia*, if *Arrian Curtius, or Plutarch* had never writ his story, as we have now. Yet this he must assert by vertue of his principle. And he that can believe that, I wonder he should scruple believing the *Popes infallibility*; for certainly no principle of the *Jesuits* is more wild and absurd than this is. Besides, I admire how it came into Mr. S's head to think, no error could come into history unless one age conspired to deceive another, when we find no age agreed in the present

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matters of *fact*, which are done in it, as to the grounds and particulars of them; to give Mr. S. an instance home to his purpose, in the late *Council of Trent* we see already what different representations there are made of it in so little a time as hath already passed since the sitting of it. One, though he had all the advantages imaginable of knowing all proceedings in it, living at the same time, conversing with the persons present at it, having the *memories* and records of the *Secretaries* themselves, yet his story is since endeavoured to be blasted by a great person of the *Roman Church*, as fictitious and partial. We see then it is at least supposed that interest and prejudice may have a great hand in abusing the world in matter of story, though one age never agree to deceive another. And instead of being perswaded by Mr. S's demonstrations, I am still of the mind, that we have no sufficient security of the truth of any story, which was not written while those persons were in being who were able to contradict the errors of it. However I deny not, but some notorious

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matters of fact, such as *Alexanders* bare conquests of *Asia*, might by the visible effects of it be preserved both in *Asia* and *Greece* for a long time. But if we come to enquire particularly, whether this or that was done by him in his conquest, which is alone pertinent to our purpose, we have no security at all from tradition, but only from the most authentick records of that story. And by this, I hope Mr. S. will have cause to thank me for *unbludging his thoughts* (his own civil expressions), and shewing him how errors may come into a story without one age conspiring to deceive the next ; and what a vast difference there is between preserving a bare matter of fact, and all the particulars relating to it. And hereby he may easily see how far the obligation extends in believing the report of former ages. For there can be no obligation to believe any further than there is evidence of truth in the matter we are obliged to. If then there be not only a possibility, but a very great probability of mistakes and errors in matters of fact, I pray what obligation doth there ly upon men absolutely

lutely to believe what is delivered by the preceding age ? But to put an issue to this controversie, let Mr. S. examine himself, and try if he can name one story that was never written, which was ever certainly propagated from one age to another by meer oral tradition ; and if he cannot, he may thereby see how little real force his argument hath in the world. For all the force of tradition lies in an unquestionable conveyance of those *Books* which contain in them the true reports of the actions of the times they were written in. But can Mr. S. think, that if the *Roman history* had never been written, it had been possible for us to have known what was done under the *Kings* and *Consuls* as now we do ? Yet if his principle holds, this necessarily follows ; for *those of that age could not but know them*, and *no age since could conspire to deceive the next*. And from hence, the most useful consequence of all is, that Mr. S. might have writ a history from the beginning of the world to this day, with a full relation of all *particulars*, if there had never been any *Book* written in the world be-

sore. And doth not Mr. S. deserve immortal credit for so rare an invention as this is, and all built on nothing short of *demonstrations*.

§. 15. But Mr. S. very prudently *foresees*,
p. 224. *what it is I must be forced to recur to*,
viz. *that being baffled with his former*
demonstration, I have no other shift to
betake myself to, but to say the case is
different between histories and points of
faith. And therefore to bring his busi-
ness home, he applies it at large to
the delivery of the *Christian faith*,
which that he might do in more ample
sort, he very finely descants on the old
Verse, Quis, quid, ubi, &c. containing
the circumstances of human actions,
and from every one of them derives
arguments for the *infallibility* of oral
tradition; which briefly and in plain
English may be summed up thus; *Since*
the author of this doctrine was the Son
of God, the doctrine it self so excellent,
and delivered in so publick a manner,
in the most convincing way, by miracle
and good living, and for so good an
end as to save mens souls, and that by
writing it in mens hearts, and testified
to

to others ; and all this at a time when men might jndg of the miracles and motives for believing it ; therefore since in all these respects it was incomparably beyond the story of Alexanders conquests, it follows, that in a manner infinitely greater must the obligation be to believe Christ's doctrine, than Alexanders or William the Congerours victories, or any history of the like nature whatsoe-
ver. All which I freely grant, but cannot yet see how from thence it follows; that oral tradition is the only rule of faith, or the means whereby we are to judg what is the doctrine of Christ, and what not. Those arguments I confess prove, that the Christians of the first age were highly concerned to enquire into the truth of these things, and that they had the greatest reason imaginable to believe them; and that it is not possible to conceive that they should not endeavour to propagate so excellent a doctrine, and of so high concernment to the world. But the question is, whether abstractly from the Books written in the first age of the Christian Church, there is so much infallibility in the oral tradition of every age,

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age, that nothing could be embraced for Christ's doctrine which was not ; and consequently, whether every age were bound to believe absolutely what was delivered it by the precedent for the doctrine of *Christ* ? Mr. S. therefore puts himself to a needless task of proving that every age was bound to believe the *doctrine of Christ*, which I never questioned ; but the dispute is, whether every age be bound on the account of *oral tradition* to believe what is delivered by the precedent for *Christ's doctrine*. But it is to be observed all along how carefully Mr. S. avoids mentioning the *written Books* of the *New Testament* ; because he knew all his game about *oral tradition* would be quite spoiled by a true stating the matter of fact in the first ages of the *Christian Church*. I hope he will not be angry with me, for asking him that question about the *Scripture*, which he asks me about the *Council of Trent* ; did he never hear of such a thing as the *Scripture* ? or is it so hard to find it ? But if he hath heard of it, I intreat him to resolve me these *Questions* : 1. Whether he doth not believe, that the

the Books of the *New Testament* were written at such a time, when the matters of fact therein recorded, were capable of being thoroughly examined ? which he cannot deny upon his own principle ; for tradition being then infallible as to the *doctrine of Christ*, the writers of these Books cannot be conceived to deliver it amiss, unless they resolved to contradict the present tradition of the *Church* ; which if they had done, those Books could never have found any reception among *Christians*. If tradition then convey the doctrine of Christ infallibly, these Books must convey it infallibly, because they contain in them the infallible tradition of the first age of the *Christian Church* ; and were written at the time when many persons living had been able to disprove any thing contained therein repugnant to truth. And that these Books were written by those persons whose names they bear, I appeal to Mr. S's own rule, *Tradition* ; for if that be infallible in any thing, it must be in this ; and if one age could conspire to deceive another in a matter of such concernment, what

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what security can be had, that it may not do so in all other things? 2. Whether he believes, that those whose intention was to write an account of the life, actions, and doctrine of *Christ*, did leave any thing out of their Books which did relate to them as of concernment for us to believe? For upon Mr. S's principles, any one may easily know what the tradition of the *Church* is; and especially such certainly who were either present themselves at the matters of fact, or heard them from those who were; and what satisfaction can any one desire greater than this? But the question is, whether this testimony were not more safely deposited in the *Church* to be conveyed by word of mouth, than it could be by being committed to writing by such who were eye and ear witnesses of the actions and doctrine of *Christ*? Upon which I advance some further *Queries*. 3. If oral Tradition were the more certain way, why was any thing written at all? It may be Mr. S. will tell us, *for moral instructions, and to give precepts of good life*; but then why may not these be as infallibly

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conveyed by tradition as doctrines of faith ? And why then were any matters of fact and points of faith inserted in the Books of the *New Testament* ? By which it certainly appears, that the intention of writing them was to preserve them to posterity. Let Mr. *S.* tell me whether it was consistent with the wisdom of men, much less with the wisdom of an *infinite Being* to employ men to do that which might be far better done another way, and when it is done can give no satisfaction to the minds of men ? 4. Whether those things which are capable of being understood when they are spoken, cease to be so when they are written ? For Mr. *S.* seems to understand those terms of a *living voice*, and *dead letters* in a very strict and rigorous manner ; as though the sense were only *quick* when spoken, and became buried in *dead letters*. But Mr. *S.* seems with the sagacious *Indian* to admire how it is possible for *dead letters* and *unsenc'd characters* to express mens meanings as well as words. I cannot enter into Mr. *S.*'s apprehension, how 24 letters by their various disposition can express
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matters of faith ? And yet to increase the wonder, he writes about matters of faith, while he is proving that matters of faith cannot be conveyed by writing. So that Mr. S's. own writing is the best demonstration against himself ; and he confutes his own *Sophistry* with his fingers, as *Diogenes* did *Zeno*'s by his motion. For doth Mr. S. hope to perswade men, that tradition is a rule of faith by his Book or not ? if not, to what purpose doth he write ? if he doth, then it is to be hoped some matters of faith may be intelligibly conveyed by writing ; especially if Mr. S. doth it. But by no means we are to believe that ever the *Spirit of God* can do it. For whatever is written by men assisted by that, is according to him but a heap of *dead letters*, and *insignificant characters*; when Mr. S. the mean while is full of *sense* and *demonstration*. Happy man that can thus out-do infinite wisdom, and write far beyond either *Prophets* or *Apostles*. But if he will condescend so far as to allow that to inspired persons which he confidently believes of himself, *viz.* that he can write a Book full of *sense*, and that any

Rule of Faith.

any ordinary capacity may apprehend the design of it, our controversie is at an end; for then matters of faith may be intelligibly and certainly conveyed to posterity by the Books of *Scripture*; and if so, there will be no need of any recourse to *oral tradition*. 5. If the Books of *Scripture* did not certainly & intelligibly convey all matters of faith, what made them be received with so much veneration in the first ages of the *Christian Church*? which were best able to judg of the truth of the matters contained in them, and the usefulness of the Books themselves. And therein we still find, that appeals were made to them, that they thought themselves concerned to vindicate them against all objections of Heathens and others; and the resolution of faith was made into them, and not tradition, as I have already manifested, and must not repeat. 6. Whether it be in the least credible, since the Books of *Scripture* Part 1: chap. 9. were supposed to contain the doctrines of faith, that every age of the Church should look on it self as obliged absolutely to believe the doctrine of the precedent by virtue of an *oral tradition*? For since they resolved

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solved their faith into the written Books, how is it possible they should believe on the account of an oral tradition? Although then the *Apostles* did deliver the doctrine of Christ to all their Disciples; yet since the records of it were embraced in the Church, men judged of the truth or falsehood of doctrines, by the conveniency or repugnancy of them to what was contained in those Books. By which we understand, that the obligation to believe what was taught by the precedent age, did not arise from the oral tradition of it, but by the satisfaction of the present age, that the doctrine delivered by it was the same with that contained in *Scripture*.

§ 16. It is time now to return to Mr. S.
p. 229, &c. who proceeds still to manifest *this obligation in posterity to believe what was delivered as matter of faith, by the precedent age of the Church*; but the force of all is the same still; *viz. that otherwise one age must conspire to deceive the next*. But the inconsequence of that, I have fully shewed already, unless he demonstrates it impossible for errors to come

come in any other way : For if we reduce the substance of what he saith to a Syllogistical form, it comes to this ; Where there is no possibility of error, there is an absolute obligation to faith ; but there is no possibility of error in the tradition of any age of the *Church* : *ergo* in every age there is an absolute obligation to believe the tradition of the present *Church*. The *minor* he thus provcs ; If no age of the *Church* can be ignorant of what the precedent taught, or conspire to deceive the next, then there is no possibility of error coming into the tradition of the *Church* in any age ; but the antecedent is true, and therefore the consequent. Now, who sees not that the force of all this lies not in proving the *minor proposition*, or that no age could conspire to deceive another ? but the consequence, *viz.* that no error can come into a *Church*, but by a general mistake, in one whole age, or the general imposture of it which we utterly deny ; and have shewed him already the falseness of it from his own concessions. And I might more largely shew it from those Do-

ctrines or opinions which they themselves acknowledg to have come into their Church without any such general mistake or imposture, as the *doctrines of Papal infallibility*, and the common belief of *Purgatory*. The very same way that Mr. *White* and Mr. *S.* will shew us how these came in, we will shew him how many others came in as erroneous and scandalous as those are. For whether *they* account these matters of faith or no, it is certain many among them do, and that the far greatest number, who assert and believe them to be the doctrine of their *Church* too. If therefore these might come in without one age mistaking or deceiving the next, why might not all those come in the same way which we charge upon them as the errors of their *Church*? And in the same manner that corrupt doctrines come in, may corrupt practises too, since *these*, as he faith, *spring from the other*. He might therefore have saved himself the trouble of finding *out how an acute Wit, or great Scholar would discover the weakness of this way*. For without pretending to be either of these, I have found

found out another way of attaquing it, than Mr. S. looked for; *viz.* from his own principles and concessions; shewing how errors might come into a Church, without a total deception or conspiracy in any one age. Which if it be true, he cannot bind me to believe what ever he tells me the present Church delivers, unless he can prove that this never came into the Church as a speculation or private opinion, and from thence by degrees hath come to be accounted a point of faith. Therefore his way of proof is now quite altered, and he cannot say we are bound to believe whatever the present Church delivers; for that which he calls the present Church, may have admitted speculations and private opinions into doctrines of faith; but he must first prove such doctrines delivered by Christ or his Apostles, and that from his time down to our age they haye been received by the whole Church for matters of faith; and when he hath done this, as to any of the points in controversie between us, I will promise him to be his *Proselyte*. But he ought still to remember, that he

is not to prove it impossible for one whole age to conspire to deceive the next; but that supposing that it is impossible for any errors to come into the tradition of the Church. Let us now see what Mr. S. objects against those words I then used against the demonstrating this way; *It is hard to conceive what reason should inforce it, but such as proves the impossibility of the contrary; and they have understandings of another mould from others, who can conceive it impossible men should not think themselves obliged to believe and do all just as their predecessors.* And whatever Mr. S. says to the contrary, I cannot yet see, but that therein I argued from the very nature and constitution of the thing. For that which I looked for, was a *demonstration*, which I supposed could not be unless the impossibility of the contrary were demonstrated. But if it be possible for Men, *Christians*, nay *Romanists* to believe on other accounts than tradition of the precedent age, I pray what demonstration can there be, that men must think themselves obliged to believe and do all just as their predecessors

sors did ? Surely if Mr. S's. fancy had not been very extravagant, he could never have thought here of *mens being obliged to cut their Beards, or wear such Garters and Hat-bands as their fore-fathers did.* For do I not mention *believing first, and then doing ?* by which it were easie to apprehend, that I meant matters of faith, and such practices as flow from them. Neither was there any such *crafty and sophistical dealing* as he charges me with ; for p. 235.
I am content his doctrine be taken in his own terms ; and I have now given a larger and fuller account why I am far from being convinced by the way he hath used for resolving faith. Passing by therefore his challenge, which I accept of, as long as he holds to the *weapon of reason and civility*, I come to consider his last enquiry, *why I should come to doubt of such an obligation* p. 236.
on in posterity, to believe their ancestors in matters of faith ; and he judiciously resolves it into *a strange distortion of human nature*, but such as it seems, is the proper effect of the *Protestants temper*, p. 237.
which is, faith he, to chuse every one his fith by his private judgement, or wit,

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working upon disputable words. Which as far as we own it, is not to believe what we see no ground for; and if this be such a *distortion of human nature*, I envy not Mr. S's. uprightness and perfection. If he means that we build our faith on our private judgments, in opposition to *Scripture*, or the *universal tradition of the Church* in all ages, let him prove it evidently in one particular, and I engage for my self and all true *Protestants*, we will renounce the belief of it. If he hath any thing further to object against the grounds of our Religion, he knows where to attaque me; let him undertake the whole, or else acknowledg it a most unreasonable thing thus to charge falsities upon us, and then say we have nothing else to say for our selves. We pretend not to chuse our faith, but heartily embrace whatever appears to have been delivered by *Christ* or his *Apostles*; but we know the *Church of Rome* too well to believe all which she would impose upon us, and are loth to have her chuse our Religion for us, since we know she hath chosen so ill for her self. But if Mr. S.

will

will not believe me in saying thus, what reason have I to believe him in saying otherwise? Such general charges then signifie nothing, but every one must judg according to the reason on both sides.

I now come to the last part of my task; which is to shew, *that this way is repugnant to common sense and experience, and that the Church of Rome hath apparently altered from what was the belief of former ages.* To which purpose my words are, *It is to no purpose to prove impossibility of motion when I see men move; no more is it to prove that no age of the Church could vary from the preceding, when we can evidently prove that they have done it.* And therefore this argument is intended only to catch easie minds that care not for a search into the history of the several ages of the Church, but had rather sit down with a superficial subtilty, than spend time in further enquiries. But two things M. S. tells me are required ere I can see that their faith varies from the former; first to see what their Church holds now, and then to see

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what the former Church held before; and he kindly tells me, if he sees any thing, I see neither well. It seems I want Mr. S's. spectacles of oral tradition to see with; but as yet I have no cause to complain of the want of them, but I see much better without them than with them. He tells me, I cannot see what their present Church holds, and therefore I cannot assure any what was held before; because, if I renounce tradition, I take away all means of knowing. The reason why I cannot candidly see (as he phrases it) what their Church holds now, is, because I cannot distinguish between faith and its explication, some Schoolmen and the Church. By which it seems it is impossible for me to know what their Church holds concerning *Invocation of Saints, Worship of Images, Communion in one kind*; for those are the points I there mention, wherein it is evident, that the Church of Rome hath receded from the doctrine and practise of the primitive Church. Or are these only the opinions and practises of some Schoolmen among them, and not the doctrine and practise of their Church? But that we might

might come to some fuller state of these controversies, I wish M. S. would settle some sure way whereby we might know distinctly what are the *doctrines* and practices of their Church. If the *Council of Trent* and *Roman Catechism* be said to be the rule of *doctrine*, I desire no other; so that those may be interpreted by practices universally allowed among them. As when that *Council* only defined, that *due honour be given to Saints*; the general practice of that *Church* may tell us what they mean by that *due honour*; and if that be not fair, I know not what is. But I see all the shift Mr. S. hath, is, when he is pinched, to say *these are the opinions of Schoolmen and private Speculators, and not the doctrine of their Church*. And if such shifts as these are must serve the turn, I should wonder if ever he be to seek for an answer. But the shortest answer of all would be, that none but those of their Church can know what she holds; and therefore it is to no purpose for *Protestants* to write against her; or it may be, that none but Mr. S. and one or two more can tell; for many among them say,

those

p. 236.

those are the doctrines of their *Church* which they deny to be. So that except Mr. *White* and Mr. *S.* and some very few *demonstrators* more, all the rest are *School-men, private Opinators*, and not to be relied on. *But I cannot see what their Church held formerly neither.* No wonder at all of that; for if I cannot see an object so near me as the present *Church*, how can it be expected I should see one so much further off as the doctrine of former ages? And his reason is so strong, as may well perswade me out of one, at least, of my five senses. *For, faith he, if I question tradition, I question whether there be any doctrine delivered, and so any Fathers.* And is not this argued like a *Demonstrator*? First he supposes there never was any way used in the world but oral tradition, and then strongly infers, if I deny that, I can know nothing. But I can yet hardly perswade my self that the *Fathers* only sate in Chimney-corners teaching their Children by word of mouth, and charging them to be sure to do so to theirs; but as they loved preserving the doctrine of faith, they should have a great care

care never to write down a word of it. But why, I wonder, should Mr. S. think, that if I do not allow of oral tradition, I must needs question whether there were any *Fathers*? I had thought I might have known there had been *Fathers* by their *Children*; I mean the *Books* they left behind them. But if all Mr. S. pleads for be only this, that no *Books* can be certainly conveyed without tradition, he dispute's without an adversary; but as I never opposed this, so I am sure it doth him little service. It is then from the *Books* of the *Fathers* that I find what the sense of the *Church* of their age was, and from thence I have shewed how vastly different the opinions and practices of the *Roman Church* are from those of the *primitive*. Although then I may not think my self obliged to believe all that the present *Church* delivers for matter of faith; yet I hope I may find what the opinions and practice of the former *Church* were by the records that are left of it. And the reason why I cannot think any one obliged to believe what every age of the *Church* delivers, is, because I think no

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man obliged to believe contradictions ; and I see the opinions and practices of several ages apparently contrary to each other.

¶ 18.

Well, but I call this way a *superficial subtlety* ; and so I think it still ; so little have Mr. S's. demonstrations wrought upon me. *But, faith he, is that which is wholly built on the nature of things superficial ?* No ; but that which pretends to be so built, may. And of that nature I have shewed this way to be, and not the former. But that I may not think him *superficial* as well as his way, he puts a profound Question to me, *What do I think Controversie is ?* and that he may the better let me know what it is, he answers himself. *I deal plainly with you*, saith he, *you may take it to be an art of talking, and I think you do so, though you will not profess it ; but I take it to be a noble science.* But to let him see that I will deal as plainly with him, as he doth with me, I will *profess* it, that I not only think *Controversie* as usually managed, but some mens way of demonstrating (Mr. S. may easily know whom

whom I mean) to be a meer *art of talking*, and nothing else. But *he takes it to be a noble science*; yes doubtless, if Mr. S. manage it, and he be the judg of it himself. His meaning I suppose is, by his following words, p. 240: *that he goes upon certain principles, and we do not*. We have already seen how certain his principles have been, and I should be somewhat ashamed of my *Religion* if I had no better. But what our *rule of faith* is, hath been amply discoursed already by you, and that in Mr. S's *clearing method*, that nothing is left for me to do, but to touch at what remains, and concludes this answer. I had the better to illustrate the weakness of that argument from *oral tradition*, brought an instance in that case parallel, *viz.* that if one ages delivering to another would prove that the faith of Christ was in every age unalterable, because no age did testifie any such alteration to be in it; by the same argument the world might be proved eternal, because no age did ever testifie to another, that the world was ever otherwise than it is. So that if oral tradition were only to be relied

lied on, there could be no evidence given of the worlds being ever otherwise than it is, and consequently the world must be believed to have been always what we see it is. This, as far as I can apprehend, is a clear and distinct ratiocination, and purposely designed to prove that we must admit of other rules to judg of alterations in the *Church* by, besides oral tradition. But Mr. S. (in his own expression) *strangely roving from the mark I aimed at, professes there is not a tittle in it parallel to his medium, nay, that he never saw in his life more absurdities couched in fewer words.* But I must take all patiently from a man who still perches on the specifical nature of things, and never flags below the sphere of science. Yet by his good leave, he either apprehends not, or wilfully mistakes my meaning; for my argument doth not proceed upon the belief of the worlds eternity, which, in his answer, he runs wholly upon as far as *eightly and lastly*, but upon the evidence of oral tradition as to no discernable alteration in any age of it. For the Question between us, is, whether in matters of alteration in the

the faith or practice of the Church, we are bound to rely only on the testimony of oral tradition; so that if no age can be instanced in wherein any alteration was made, and this delivered by that age, then we are bound to believe there hath been no alteration since *Christ* and the *Apostles* times; now I say, if this hold good, I will prove the world eternal by the same argument; taking this for our principle, that we are bound to rely only on oral tradition in the case, originally derived from the matter of fact seen by those of the first age; for that which never was otherwise then it is, is eternal; but we cannot know by oral tradition that the world ever was otherwise then it is; for no age of the world can be instanced in, wherein we have any testimony of any alteration that was in it. Either then we must believe that the world ever was what it is, *i. e.* eternal; or else we must say, that we are not to rely barely on oral tradition in this case, but we must judg whether the world were made or no, by other *mediums* of Scripture and reason. And this

this was all which I aimed at, *viz.* to shew that where there is no evidence from oral tradition; yet if there be *Scripture* and *reason*, there is sufficient ground for our faith to stand upon. And so I apply it to the present case; though we could not prove barely from the *tradition* of any one age, that there had been any alteration in the faith or practice of the *Church*; yet if I can prove that there hath been such from *Scripture* and *reason*, this is sufficient for me to believe it. And now I dare appeal to the indifferent Reader, whether this be so *full of absurdities*, or it be such a *rambling Chimerical argument* (as he calls it), *no two pieces of which hang together with themselves, or any thing else*. Which being expressions of as great modesty as science, I am content Mr. *S.* should bear away the honour of them and his demonstrations together.

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§, 19.

The last thing he quarrels with me for, is, that I say, *if we can evidently prove, that there have been alterations in the Church, then it is to no purpose*

purpose to prove that impossible which we see actually done. And this appears not only because the Scripture supposes a degeneracy in the Christian Church, which could never be, if every age of the Church did infallibly believe and practise as the precedent up to Christ's time did; but because we can produce clear evidence that some things are delivered by the present Church, which must be brought in by some age since the time of Christ; for which I refer the Reader to what I had said about communion in one kind, invocation of Saints, and worship of Images: In all which, I say, I had proved evidently that they were not in use in some ages of the Christian Church; and it is as evident that these are delivered by the present Church, and therefore this principle must needs be false. In answer to this, Mr. S. wishes, I would tell him first what evidence means, whether a strong fancy, or a demonstration? I mean that which is enough to persuade a wise man, who judges according to the clearest reason, which I am sure is more than ever his demonstrations will do. But it is a pleasant specta-

cle to see how Mr. S, layes about him, at my saying that the *Scripture* supposes a degeneracy in the Christian Church. *Incomparably argued!* faith he, *why, see we not the place?* does it evidently speak of *faith, or manners;* the *Universal Church, or particular persons?* but be it in *faith, be it universal,* does it suppose this degeneracy already past, which is only proper to your purpose, or yet to come? *That is, does it say there must be a total Apostacy in faith before the year 1664?* Alas, he had forgot this. Most incomparably answered! For if the degeneracy be in 1665. or any years after, what becomes of M. S's demonstration then, that no errors could come into the Church? but it seems his demonstration holds but till 1664. and I easily believe another year will never believe the truth of it. But if such a thing as a degeneracy be possible, how then stands the infallibility of tradition, when there can be no degeneracy without falling from the doctrine and practices of *Christ and his Apostles?* But that such a degeneracy hath already been in that which calls it self the *Catholick Church,* and

and that both in faith and manners, I shall refer Mr. S. to the learned Author of the late *Idea of Antichristianism* and *Synopsis Prophetica*, where he may find enough to persuade him that his demonstration was far from holding so long as 1664. And now I leave the Reader to judg whether the foregoing evidences against the infallibility of *oral tradition*, or Mr. S's. demonstrations have the greater force of reason in them. And if he will not stoop so far from the height of his perch, as to take notice of what I have elsewhere said, I am resolved to let him see I am not at all concerned about it: I begin to understand him so well by this *Appendix*, that I can give my self a reasonable account why he thought it not fit to meddle with any other part of my Book. But if Mr. S. be resolved not to answer any of the testimonies I there produce, unless I ^{P. 244} *single them out, and print them at the end of this Answer, (i. e. remove them from that evidence which attends them in the series of the discourse)* I can only say, he is the most imperious answerer I have met with, who is re-

solved never to deal with an adversary, but on his own unreasonable terms. Thus heartily wishing Mr. S's. Science as great as his opinion of it, and a good effect of our endeavours to promote the one, by removing the other, I am

Sir,
Your affectionate friend
and servant,

London. June 28.

1665.

Edward Stillingfleet.

FINIS



Postscript.

SIR,

SINCE the dispatch of the former Papers, I have met with another Treatise, wherein I find my self concerned, written by the Author of *Fiat Lux*, the Title whereof is *Diaphanta*: I am afraid the Title affrights you; for I assure you it is the most formidable thing in his whole Book. But the man is a very modest man, and hugely different from Mr. S's. humor; for he is so far from offering to demon-

strate

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strate the grounds of faith ; that all he pretends to in the title of his Book, is to excuse Catholick Religion against the opposition of several Adversaries. What fault I pray hath the Catholick Religion committed, that it must now come to be excused instead of being defended ? But when I look into that part which concerns my self, I presently understand the meaning of it, which is not to excuse Catholick Religion, but themselves for not being able to defend it. For he very ingeniously tells us, that faith is firm and constant, though all his talk for it be miserably weak : i.e. he is sure they have an excellent Religion, though he knows not what to say for it ; and their faith is a very good faith, but it hath not yet had the good fortune to be understood by them. For he acknowledges, that as often as they dispute, they are beyond the business, (so may any one believe, who reads their late Books,) which is in effect to say, there is no way left of disputing any longer with adversaries about their faith ; only they must believe it stoutly themselves

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selves; but it is to no purpose to offer to defend it. Nay, it doth their faith a great deal of mischief; for, saith he, *in reading controversies, we see not so much the nature of the faith, as the wit of him who opposes or defends it.* From whence we may easily gather what unspeakable mischief they do their cause by writing for it. By which expressions, we may guess at what a low ebb the defence of their faith is among them: for the way now taken to defend it, is by disowning the defenders of it, and by saying that they only vent their own opinions; and though we confute them never so much, yet their faith holds good still. Was ever a good cause driven to such miserable shifts as these are, especially among those who pretend to wit and learning? One, he saith, *T.C.* vents a private opinion of his own, and it is not a pin matter whether it stand or fall; another, he saith the same of *I.S.* a third of *J.V.C.* and yet for all this, their religion is very firm and sure, and they are all at perfect agreement

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about it. Is this the *victory over me*, Mr. S. mentions to be so easie a thing ? I see that by the same figure M. S. calls his way of arguing demonstration, running out of the field shall be accounted conquering. For I never saw any person do it more openly than this Author does. For he plainly confesses, that *his Catholick Gentleman went quite besides his business*, that he built upon indefensible principles, that *his theological ratiocination was indeed pretty, but too weak to hold*. And are not we hugely too blame, if we do not cry up such mighty Conquerors as these are ? Truly, Sir, I expect the very same answer should be returned to your Book ; that Mr. S's argument *is a pretty theological ratiocination* ; and that *your answer is not unwitty* : but though that way will not hold, another will. Thus, when they are beaten off *Infallibility*, they run to *Tradition* : and when they are again beaten off *Tradition*, then back again to *Infallibility*. So that the short of all their answers is, though such a one cannot defend our faith, yet I can ;

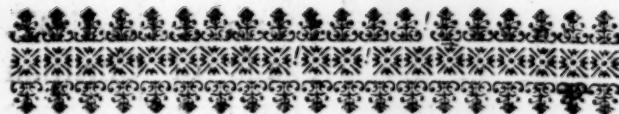
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can ; though I cannot, yet the faith is firm and constant still. I wonder what their *Superiors* think of this way of proceeding among them ; we should imagine, if they be so weak as they say themselves, they had much better keep them from appearing abroad, and exposing their cause so ridiculously to contempt. But it may be, they think their *faith* is the better as well as their *devotion*, for their *ignorance* : and that it would be a mighty disparagement to their cause, for such silly people to be able to defend it. It is enough for them to admire it themselves, and to say as their common people use to do, though they cannot defend it, yet there are some that can. And although it may be no particular person can do it, yet their cause is able to defend it self. But for all that I can see, by such kind of answers, the intention of them is, to intreat us not to triumph over the weakness of their present Writers, but to wait till the *Cause* it self thinks fit to write. And when it doth so, they may expect a further

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further answer; but it were a great piece of cruelty for us to hasten their ruine, who fall so fast before us by each others Pens.

FINIS.



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